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"WHY, THAT YOUNG SNIPE IS FELIX FOX, THE BOY SPOTTER OV NEW YORK!"

OR,

The Gold Gang of New York.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,

AUTHOR OF "ARKANSAW," "MOUNTAIN DETECTIVE," "CAPTAIN APOLLO," "DYNAMITE DAN," "BUCKSKIN DETECTIVE," "CAPTAIN OUTLASS," "ROUGH ROB," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A FLY IN THE WEB.

At exactly half-past four o'clock one midsummer afternoon a passenger-train pulled into one of the depots of Jersey City and deposited its human freight. Immediately there was a break for the ferries, and, as the train had been a few minutes late, many rushed frantically forward, as if their lives depended on reaching the boat within a certain time.

"Got to cross a river, hey?" exclaimed a young man, who rushed upon the boat and took possession of the first vacant seat that met his gaze. "Why didn't they build New York on Jersey ground, anyway? My ticket didn't say anything about a boat-ride that I saw, but I guess it's all for the same price. Hang me! if I pay anything extra for this ride if the collector comes round. They agreed to haul Omri Otway from Greenblade to New York for two dollars an' thirty-five cents, an' they've got to do it!"

Omri Otway, as the speaker called himself, had not yet reached his majority, but he was certainly big enough to cast a ballot. On the very day that saw him rush upon the ferry-boat to visit New York for the first time in his life, he had rounded his nineteenth year, and his physical appearance denoted that he was good for many years to come.

But verdancy looked out of Omri's eyes; it was stamped on his wearing apparel from hat to boots, and the old-fashioned carpet-sack which he kept squeezed between his ankles, put the seal on the picture. He had dressed himself for his first visit to the great metropolis in new black hat, light cross-barred pantaloons, coat to match, and a plum-colored vest, with gilt buttons much older than the wearer. He wore a standing collar that threatened to cut his throat, while its stiffness kept his head in a certain position, and a loud necktie rested under his chin.

The youth from Greenblade was by no means bad-looking. His face was full and ruddy, he had deep blue eyes and short auburn hair, and his figure, which was well-formed, showed Omri Otway to be in strength a veritable young lion.

He was noticed by more than one passenger as the boat plowed its way through the water toward the Courtlandt street landing that afternoon, and many remarks were made concerning his verdant appearance; but he sat erect in his corner, apparently oblivious to all that was passing around him, and held his head erect while he kept his baggage squeezed between his legs.

When the boat ran into the "crib" and was made fast to the bridge, Omri Otway seized his carpet-sack and hurried through the ferry-house to the street beyond, where he suddenly paused like a person overwhelmed by the bustle and magnitude of the city in which he had landed.

"Right this way for up-town! Take you to any hotel desired. Here you are, my friend. Clean hack an' good horses! All aboard!"

Omri Otway seemed bewildered. He had reached the street and was surrounded by half a dozen hackmen who had pounced upon him on sight like so many hawks upon a hen. Omri could hardly hear his own voice.

"Which hotel, sir? Astor, Fifth Avenue or French's?"

"Nary one at present," said the big boy, drawing back and then planting himself firmly. "I guess I know whar I want to go without any instructions. I'm no pumpkin if I was raised in Jersey sand! If you'll jest keep your claws off'n me till I look at the address, I'll give one of ye a job."

Omri dived a hand into the depths of an inner pocket and drew forth a well-worn envelope which bore the New York post-mark.

"I reckon thar's about the location o' my destination," he continued, taking from the envelope a card which he put into one of the six hands thrust forward to receive it.

"All right! Take you thar like lightning!" cried the hackman, and then he read the card aloud:

"SHARPE & DODGE,

"GREAT AMERICAN ESTATE DETECTIVES.

"Heirs Hunted up, Fortunes Found, etc., etc.

"NO FAILURES.

"No. — Bowery."

There was an audible chuckle among the hackmen as Omri was hustled into one of the cabs and the door closed.

"Heir to a dukedom," one big fellow laughed. "Drive 'im carefully, Jim! Mebbe he's the lost heir to the throne ov Madagascar!"

Away rattled the cab with Omri Otway half buried among the cushions, and wondering if his experience was not a dream. He still kept his baggage squeezed between his legs as if it contained something precious, and took but little note of the busy city outside.

The verdant youth was hurried along up Courtlandt street to Broadway, up the great thoroughfare to Park Row then the horses struck

Chatbam street and the Bowery between East Broadway and Pell streets.

"Here ye are—Sharpe and Dodge—Bowery," at last sung out the hackman as the vehicle came to a stand-still, and he appeared at the door ready to help the Jerseyman out. "One dollar, sir."

"One dollar?" echoed Omri.

"Yes, sir. Man an' baggage one dollar."

"My name isn't Vanderbilt."

"Can't help it. Shall I hold yer valise till the fare's paid?"

"Jehosaphat! no!" cried Omri. "I wouldn't trade that carpet-sack for your team. Here's yer dollar. It's a reg'lar skin game, but I can't parley. Whar's Sharpe and Dodge's office?"

"That hallway, thar. You'll find 'em on second floor, I think. Good-day, my young duke." And the hack rattled away before the astonished Omri could return the parting.

Picking up his luggage, the Jersey youth executed a bee-line for the hallway designated by the hackman and was soon hunting for the names of "Sharpe and Dodge" among the many signs just beyond the door. His hunt was soon concluded, for a gilt sign informed him that the firm he sought could be found on the third floor, fourth door to the right.

"All hunk!" ejaculated Omri, and the next moment he began to climb the steps with his luggage thrown over his shoulders.

"It's worth the fortune I'm to git to climb up here," he ejaculated when he reached the third landing almost out of breath, with the lower parts of his limbs as heavy as lead. "But I'd climb to the skies for the chances I've got. So hyer goes for Sharp an' Dodge's office."

The "fourth door to the right" was not hard to find, for a little sign tacked upon it informed the fortune-seeker that it led to the presence of the wonderful firm who never failed to find lost heirs, and Omri walked in without the announcement of a knock.

He found himself in a small room. The floor was covered with a well worn and discolored hemp carpet, and the walls and ceiling were rather dingy. There was an oval table in the center of the room, several chairs scattered about, and a desk near one of the front windows.

At the table sat a man with his broad shoulders turned toward the door, and his feet on the table. At the desk was another man apparently asleep, for he leaned forward and his face was buried between his arms.

It must have struck Omri Otway that he had reached Sharpe and Dodge at a very dull time—that is, if the two men comprised the firm.

The door opening easily had admitted the young Jerseyman into the room without noise, and the man at the table was unaware of his presence till he spoke.

"Ar' you Mr. Sharpe or Mr. Dodge?" asked Omri.

The man addressed almost fell from his chair in turning upon the youth, and when he faced him Omri saw a florid face with two piercing black eyes, a waxed mustache and a pointed goatee.

"Good-evening, sir," saluted the man, rising.

"I am Silas Sharpe of the firm of Sharpe and Dodge. You've made no mistake, young man," eying Omri thoroughly. "Ah, let me see; you are—"

"Omri Otway of Greenblade, New Jersey," interrupted the boy. "I've been in correspondence with you about an estate in England, an' I've come to show you the old papers that I wrote about, in my last letter."

"Ah, yes! I remember," assured Silas Sharpe, rubbing his sleek hands while his eyes twinkled.

"If you had written us that you were coming, we would have met you at the ferry. Take a seat, Mr. Otway. We're glad to see you. Jersey prospers, I suppose? Grandest State in the Union. I'll rouse Mr. Dodge."

Silas Sharpe stepped to the man at the desk and let his hand fall lightly upon his shoulder.

The sleeper started instantly and looked up.

"Our Mr. Otway has come, Darius," explained Sharpe.

"Otway? Otway? By George! is he actually here?" was the answer.

Darius Dodge, a wiry little man with a hatchet face, cleanly shaven, and steel-gray eyes separated by a hawkish beak, sprang at Omri Otway as if he intended to devour him.

"I'm glad to inform you that you're in luck!" he cried, squeezing Omri's hand. "Why didn't you write you were coming? But, no difference now; you ran the gantlet safely an' have reached us with the papers. You'll do to travel, Mr. Otway. By Jehu! there's nothing verdant about this young gentleman, eh, Mr. Sharpe?"

and Dodge's hand fell patronizingly upon Omri's shoulder.

"He'll do," said Sharpe, with a wink for his partner. "Now we'll look at the papers, Omri."

The youth did not notice the suspicious familiarity of these city sharks, but opened his carpet-sack and laid a bundle of old papers on the table.

"Thar they are!" he observed. "The Anthony Morley mentioned in them was my grandfather on my mother's side."

Silas Sharpe and Darius Dodge fell to examining the papers, and more than once their eyes met and glistened, and their knees touched significantly under the table. They looked like men before whom a gold-mine had suddenly opened.

"We think they're all right, my boy," Silas Sharpe finally announced.

"I'm glad to hear of that."

"We'll git every farthing of the fortune, interest an' all," put in Dodge. "You want supper an' rest after your journey. Mr. Sharpe will take care of you. By Jupiter! Omri, I'm glad you came. Take him to your hotel, Silas. Remember that he's our guest—our distinguished client, sir. Good-night, Omri! I'll see you in the morning. Ch, yes, we've got a safe for the papers. No thieves get 'em here."

Five minutes later Omri Otway stood on the darkening street, with Silas Sharpe. The man eyed him like a hawk.

"It isn't often that a gold-mine drops at the feet of Sharpe and Dodge," mused the gold shark; "but one has dropped there to-day! Yes, I'll take you to my hotel, my Jersey tenderfoot. It's a daisy! Some of its boarders never leave when once established there! Darius will spin a web by the time I get back. We haven't caught a fly like this for many months. Come, Mr. Otway!"

The last words were addressed aloud to the youth and he was soon following Silas Sharpe up the Bowery.

"Try me for a clam! if the spider hasn't nailed a fly!" exclaimed a boy, who almost ran against Silas Sharpe and his companion, but who saved himself from a collision by springing nimbly aside. "I'll jes' shadow you, my innocent Silas, an' see whether you take the clover blossom to your own sweet boardin'-house. You look too happy for that fat boy's good. Thar's some cunnin' scheme afoot—some devilish plot. I see it in yer eyes, Silas; they've got the devil's glint in 'em, so I'll spot you, you Bowery eel. Felix Fox wants a job. He hasn't struck a lead in three weeks." And away glided the boy almost in Silas Sharpe's shadow.

CHAPTER II.

MOTEL CANARY'S TRAP.

MR. SILAS SHARPE led the boy, who was dodging along in his wake, a pretty long chase. He conducted Omri Otway up the Bowery to Canal street, then turned abruptly to the left and walked west to Mott, which he traveled to Hester. Then he executed the sharp wheel to the west again, and soon turned into unsavory Mulberry with his unsuspecting charge.

The youth from Jersey had kept at Silas's side with some difficulty. He was not used to the crowded walks of a great city, to being jostled several times a minute by people who seemed to take delight in jostling him. It was not that way in Greenblade, Omri thought.

Silas Sharpe seemed to be near home the moment he struck Mulberry street. Omri noticed that more people nodded to him than usual, and he was quick-witted enough to suspect that the senior member of the fortune-finding house was among acquaintances.

"Somewhat of a man, this Mr. Sharpe," confessed the fat boy to himself. "People seem to know him here. A man who helps to run a fortune-finding establishment ought to be somebody even in New York. Don't he keep his mustache up in style, though? He could bore sole-leather with the ends, I do believe."

Mulberry street is not a delectable quarter of New York. Many of its inhabitants get their living in questionable business, and many old shops are the "stores" of foreigners whose back rooms could tell stories at which the front rooms would blush. It is the abode of vicious padrones who get rich from the labor of the little violinists whom they send out to fiddle and beg through the streets of New York. Many of the buildings are occupied entirely by people of this class, so that Mulberry street might be called the "Italian quarter" of the city.

Omri Otway, fresh from the blooming fields of New Jersey, and with the marks of verdancy all over him, could not pass up Mulberry with-

out attracting attention. Italian gamins and street Arabs shouted at him in two languages, and a boisterous crowd of yelling urchins sometimes came so near that he involuntarily sidled up to Silas Sharpe for protection.

"These rats never hurt any one," remarked the money-shark, glancing down at Omri with a laugh. "I've kicked 'em out o' my path many a night, an' they stand kickin' right well, too, when the boot is on a man's foot. Hands off this young gentleman, you macaroni spawn, or, by Jehu! I'll apply sole-leather to the most sensitive part of yer anatomy! Clear out!"

Silas Sharpe's look was interest on his words; the gamins drew off, but followed at a respectful distance, gazing Omri in a manner that made him clench his hands.

The long walk ended at last, for Sharpe halted suddenly before a dingy, three-story frame house, opened a door which was not locked and thrust Omri into a darkened hallway.

"This is my present hotel," he explained to the youth. "The Grand Metropolitan was burned last week, an' I have temporary quarters here. It's not as nice as a palace, Omri, but the beauty is that it's home-like, an' better in many respects than the flash hotels up-town."

"It's not like my home," the young Jerseyan decided, remembering the little room, cosey and neat, in the upper story of a farm-house near Greenblade. "I don't see why a dandy man like Mr. Silas Sharpe should stop in a house like this."

Silas gave him no chance to question him about the house, but led him up-stairs where he was ushered into a room and told to wait there a short time.

"Come, Mother Canary, fix yourself up a little. I've fetched you a boarder," Silas informed a woman whom he encountered in a small room near the one in which Omri awaited his return.

"Who now? another greenhorn?" cried the "keeper," who was the very picture of an Amazon—huge, coarse-featured and slovenly dressed.

"Yes, another one," laughed Silas. "There's a fortune for you, Mother Canary, if you manage this boarder just right. He walked into our pasture like an innocent lamb this afternoon."

"A thousand, Silas?" asked the woman looking up into the man's face.

"More than that, Mother."

"Where is he?" exclaimed the Amazon—eagerly.

"In the parlor. But, fix up a little. I want you to put your best foot forward."

Mother Canary retired for a minute; then sailed back into the room in a clean dress with her hair pushed back from her eyes, and, for her, rather presentable.

"Show me the new boarder—ha! ha!" she exclaimed.

Silas Sharpe led her to the parlor where Omri sat in a rickety arm-chair.

"This is my landlady, Omri," explained Silas. "You'll find this place quite home-like an' this lady real motherly."

That woman motherly? Could a buzzard be a dove? Even Omri could not help smiling at Silas Sharpe's announcement.

Mother Canary came forward and expressed pleasure at seeing Omri in her house, and hoped that he would make himself at home. She always did like young men from the country; they reminded her of her young brothers who had grown into prosperous farmers (which of course, was a falsehood), and recalled her own innocent youth spent in the country (which was another).

Night came down on the city and found the young fortune-hunter in a little bedroom on the second floor of Mother Canary's house.

He had come to the metropolis in response to several letters received within the past two months from "Sharpe and Dodge, Great American Estate Detectives." The youth had accidentally encountered one of their shrewdly worded advertisements, which called for the lost heirs of an English fortune called "the Morley estate." A few days prior to his first letter he had found in an old trunk in the farm-house loft certain discolored and ancient documents which led him to believe that he might be one of the heirs to the fortune.

The first reply from Sharpe and Dodge drew him on. The firm "had no doubt" that he was an heir; they would like to see him, and therefore, armed with the papers Omri, who was an orphan living on a distant relative's bounty, had come to New York, and had walked into a trap which had probably been sprung on several people before him.

The gleaming eyes of the two land-sharks on the Bowery did not shine over the papers for

nothing. They knew that they certainly did establish the boy's heirship, beyond the shadow of a doubt; they knew the worth of the English estate, and, if it slipped through their fingers, it would not be their fault.

Omri's room at Mother Canary's looked more like a prison than a home. One window, small and closely curtained, looked out upon the street, and for an hour the boy stood by it looking out at the, to him, singular scenes depicted by the lighted lamps.

"This ain't Greenblade by a thousand odds!" ejaculated Omri. "It's New York, bigger than ten thousand Greenblades. I don't like Mr. Sharpe's hotel; I don't admire the landlady; an' by Jupiter! I don't fancy Mr. Sharpe himself any too well. I wonder what street they call this, anyhow? I tried to count the squares between the office an' this house, but I couldn't get 'em all. This isn't gettin' at the Morley fortune very fast, but, mebbe I'll be able to take a step in the right direction to-morrow. I like Mr. Dodge better than Mr. Sharpe, I think. Will they play fair with me? Let 'em try otherwise, an' I'll show 'em that they've stirred up real ex-Jersey lightning in Omri Otway of Greenblade."

The youth had been escorted to the first floor to supper, which consisted of strong ham, burned eggs, and very black coffee, but as his journey had sharpened his appetite, he did justice to the poor meal. Silas Sharpe did not appear at the table, Mother Canary excusing him by saying that business had called him back to the office.

As the night deepened, the street lamps seemed to glow with more brilliancy, and by and by Omri retired from the window, for his eyes suddenly grew heavy, and he cast himself upon the bed partly undressed. He fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow.

He did not see the face that watched him from the door that stood ajar. It was the face of Mother Canary, and her eyes held an evil gleam while she regarded the sleeper.

Presently the door opened and she glided into the room. She seemed confident that the boy's sleep was of the soundest kind, as indeed it was. A drug administered in the black coffee had done its work.

Mother Canary stooped at the foot of the bed and appeared to be fixing something there. A moment later she performed a like service at the foot of the head-posts. Her fingers worked deftly and her eyes twinkled.

"Silas said I should have more than a thousand, ha, ha!" chuckled the hag. "Silas an' Mother Canary know how to work together. Many's the time I've sprung the trap on the flies that have walked into his parlor. There! my young-sand-hiller. You ar' fixed for keeps!"

Mother Canary threw the bull's-eye of a little dark-lantern upon the Jerseyan's face ere she glided from the room, closing the door softly behind her. Five minutes later the bedstead began to move; a portion of the floor directly beneath it sunk slowly and without the slightest noise. Inch by inch it went down; now the boy and the bed-clothes were below the rest of the floor, now the tops of the posts. The descent would not have roused a cat. Of course the drugged youth was unconscious.

The bed and its occupant remained out of sight a short time. At length the tops of the posts reappeared above the floor, then the pillows, and finally the entire bed.

But this time it had no tenant. Omri Otway, the youth from Greenblade, who had been decoyed to New York by two of the shrewdest villains alive, had mysteriously disappeared.

Just two hours later a light rap was heard on the door that opened into the office of Sharpe and Dodge, and when it was opened by the mustached member of the firm, a thin, weazen-faced girl of fifteen slipped inside.

"Give me the letter," said Silas Sharpe, extending his hand toward the girl before she could speak.

How did he know she had a letter for him? Ah, he was expecting it.

The girl fumbled in her bosom for a minute and then produced a bit of crumpled paper which Silas Sharpe clutched like a starving man clutches a crust.

"You can go back now," he said to the messenger as he glanced toward the door.

The girl retired, the door locked itself behind her, and Sharpe thrust the paper into his partner's face.

"What d'ye say to that, Darius?" he exclaimed. "That letter doesn't say much, but it says enough."

Darius Dodge looked at the paper and read the three little words scrawled upon it:

"It is done!"

The next moment he jumped up and caught Silas Sharpe's hand.

"By Jupiter! Silas, there were golden feathers on that Jersey pigeon!" he cried.

"Gold feathers with diamond tips!" exclaimed Silas Sharpe. "I'll tell you, Darius—" "Hark!"

Darius Dodge sprang to the door, opened it and looked out.

He saw no one in the lighted hall, but, not satisfied, he tip-toed it to the stairway and looked down. Still, he saw no one, but his eyes were not sharp enough to see the figure stretched out on one of the lower steps.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE SCENT.

DARIUS DODGE had no sooner retreated back to the office than the figure lying on the step got up and hurried down into the street. It proved to be the figure of a well-built boy of seventeen whose movements denoted activity, and whose eyes were densely black, quick and penetrating.

"So that Jersey pigeon had gold feathers, Mist'ers Sharpe and Dodge!" he ejaculated, glancing up at the building when he found himself on the sidewalk. "We are yet to see whether they will fill your pillows. I know you two sharps pretty well, I think. New York, big as it is, doesn't hold two meaner rascals than the so-called 'Great American Estate Detectives.' More than one fly has been decoyed into their web, and that's the last of 'em, too. Them two villains can account for more than one missing man if they would. An' now they've roped in another victim—an innocent boy from the Jerseys. Felix Fox will see, my two rosebuds, whether you play your last hand out to your entire satisfaction. The pigeon is pretty safe where he is, for a few hours. I'll see Rosa first, an' then, mebbe, I'll hunt up the Pointer; but I don't know about him."

Felix Fox shook his head doubtfully at the end of the last sentence, and started off at a brisk pace, which soon landed him in front of what was a large tenement-house on Hester street. The entrance to the building was a common hallway at one side of the front, and the Boy Spotter ran up-stairs to the fourth floor, where he rapped at a door over which was an open transom, and beyond it a light.

The door was quickly opened by a young girl, who held a piece of unfinished work in her hands.

Felix glided into the room, and glancing up at the transom, said to the girl:

"Mebbe we'd better close it, Rosa. I've got something important to say."

In an instant Rosa seized a cord that hung alongside the door-frame, gave it a smart jerk, and the transom was closed. Felix walked forward and dropped into a chair that stood beside a sewing-machine, and tossed his hat carelessly upon a bed near by.

"Well, Rosa, they've got another pigeon," were his first words, when the girl, who was very beautiful though slightly pale and about his own age, had taken a chair near by.

"They?—who, Felix?"

"Why, the Gold Spiders of the Bowery—Silas Sharpe an' Darius Dodge. This time they've roped in a greenhorn from Jersey—a big, good-lookin' boy with no gumption an' bad luck. I'll bet my molars that he was decoyed to the city by those very scamps."

"Where is he now?"

"At that angelic resort on Mulberry street. He's already in Mother Canary's hands."

The girl started.

"You have told me so much about that woman, Felix, that I must believe her to be one of the worst women in New York," she said.

"No, Rosa, she's the very worst!" exclaimed the boy. "Shake 'em all up in one bag an' Mother Canary would fall out first."

"A bad woman, then?"

"A she-devil!"

"And the boy from New Jersey has fallen into her clutches?"

"Yes; I saw Silas Sharp take him to the den. He wears like a lamb, for, raised in the country, he believes every good-lookin', fair-speakin' man a friend. He's never been fooled worse than he is to-night. I don't know him—not even his name, Rosa; but, by Jericho! he has one friend in New York, an' his name is Felix Fox!"

The eyes of the sewing girl sparkled with sympathy and delight.

"Don't I know that the advertised business of them two scoundrels is only a pretense to cover up their villainies?" continued Felix. "They advertise through the country paper for lost

heirs to big estates in England an' every now an' then, as I have reason to believe, they get a pigeon worth pluckin'. I put the Pointer on to them once, but he laughed an' said I must be mistaken. It got away with my racket to hear the Pointer go on in that way about men he should know something about. I was floored, Rosa. I think I could convince him now."

"But, will you?" asked the girl. "Some-how-or-other, I don't fancy the Pointer."

"Has he been here lately?"

"Not for four days. He may be a good detective, Felix, but I don't know about his gentlemanly qualities."

"What! did he insult you, Rosa?" exclaimed the boy.

"N—no," said the girl, hesitating just the least and adroitly avoiding Felix's gaze. "But I don't like him. I can't tell why."

"He is called one of the best spotters in New York. I have known him to work up cases where the best detectives of the regular agencies have failed. The Pointer is private, you know."

"So you have told me."

"He works the missin' man racket for all there is in it you see. For instance:—A man comes to the city from Jersey or Pennsylvania with considerable money on his person. His friends wait a week for him, but he fails to turn up at home. Another week passes, an' still not a line from him. They come to the city themselves, an' put the police after the missin' man, but it's no go, Rosa. Then they fall back on the regular agencies an' try it again. Failure, as before. By this time they are frantic an' willin' to pay anything for the missin' individual. Then it is that the Pointer gets at the case; but first he gets the reward doubled if he kin. That's the lay he works—the missin' man racket—an' he works it for all there is in it, too. He seldom fails. I've known him to find ten missin' men within a year an' he got not less than a thousand in each case."

"Ten thousand dollars?" exclaimed Rosa.

"More than that. In one case he got five thousand for findin' a young banker from Delaware. The victim was found in the basement of an empty house on Houston street, near the river. His mind was so near gone that he couldn't remember how he got there, but the Pointer found him, all the same."

The face of the listening girl expressed her astonishment.

"Is he your friend?" she asked.

"I know him well. But you see I don't have to hunt the Pointer up to find the pigeon from Jersey. I have tracked him myself to Mother Canary's, an' I know that the two villains on the Bowery decoyed him thither. I'm goin' to show my hand, Rosa."

"Against Silas Sharpe and Darius Dodge?"

"Why not? I'm goin' to Mother Canary's. I've long had a desire to see the inside of that nefarious trap."

"Heavens, no!" cried the girl, reaching across the machine and clutching the boy's sleeve. "From what you have told me about this woman, she will brook no spies. If she is in league with the money-sharks of the Bowery, she will suspect you."

"Well, she's their partner—the old fence is," returned Felix, calmly. "The only way to get at the Jerseyman's whereabouts is to get into Mother Canary's trap. What it looks like inside I don't know, but I'm goin' to see."

"Be careful, Felix."

"Trust me for that, Rosa. That boy didn't look like he had money with him, but why should Dodge call him a pigeon with gold feathers?"

"You heard him?"

"I listened at the door of the gold sharp's den. Mebbe Rosa," and Felix laughed—"mebbe that greenhorn is heir to a pile in England. He might be a long-lost duke, or a count, or something of that sort. One thing is certain—Sharpe and Dodge know his worth, an' that's why he sleeps at Mother Canary's to-night."

Felix rose and picked up his hat as he finished.

"You'll make your visit in the daytime, Felix?" the sewing girl said, looking at him.

"No; to-night," was the response. "Time is precious to the fly in the web. Look here, Rosa. Should the Pointer come while I'm gone, mum's the word."

"Certainly," assured the girl, with a smile.

"This is one missin' man that he must not get on to. I'll boss this job myself. Good-night, Rosa. If I get out o' Mother Canary's trap safe I'll report to-morrow night."

"Good-night, Felix," and the girl followed the Boy Spotter to the door to admonish him to be very careful, and to keep eyes and ears while

on the dangerous mission he was about to take hold of.

"I'm no sand-piper," he called back merrily to Rosa, the sewing-girl; and then his agile figure whisked out of sight down the stairway.

"That's a girl worth her weight in gold," confessed Felix Fox to himself, as he went down the steps, two at a time. "I want the Pointer to keep his distance an' not fool around her. If he'll tend to his business I'll tend to mine, but if he doesn't, by Jupiter! I'll put a finger into somebody else's affairs!"

Felix knew the city well. Raised in it from childhood, and early deprived of parental care, he had been allowed to roam at will, and had thus familiarized himself with the streets of New York.

Early in life he had taken a singular interest in Messrs. Sharpe and Dodge, and had long ago reached the conclusion that they were a pair of rascals who should see the interior of a State prison. He believed that their business covered a great deal of cunning rascality, and that in the little office on the Bowery, were hatched some of the most infamous plots ever heard of.

"If anything happens to me—if I don't come back to-morrow night, Rosa will know that I fell into bad hands at Mother Canary's. But I'm goin' to keep my eyes an' ears open. I've been in traps before, but never between the jaws of yours, my Mulberry blossom."

It was not a very long walk from Rosa's to the abode of the infamous woman who presided over the Mulberry street house, and by the time Felix reached it he had altered his appearance somewhat.

The sights and sounds of the Italian quarter were not strange to him; he had threaded the streets a thou-and times before, and the gamins who had hooted at Omri Otway's heels let him alone. He did not know that he was watched by a figure with a quick, nervous tread, on the opposite side of the street—a tall, hatchet-faced man, who had shadowed him almost from the very door of Rosa's tenement home.

If Felix had looked across the street, he probably would not have seen this person, and he therefore kept on, with no knowledge that he was tracked.

The abode of Mother Canary was well known to him, and when he found himself in front of the house, he uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Now, I'll see what lies between the jaws of this trap, decided Felix, and the next moment he stepped into the hallway and jerked the greasy knocker.

At the same time the hatchet-faced spy crossed the street, with a pair of curiously sparkling eyes fixed on the boy. He stepped upon the sidewalk as the door was pulled open, and a moment later it shut with a bang upon Felix Fox.

CHAPTER IV.

THE JAWS OF THE TRAP.

As many times as the Boy Spotter had seen the abode of Mother Canary, he had never crossed its threshold before. He often doubted whether there was a harder hole anywhere on Mulberry street famous for rough places; he was sure that Mother Canary had no equal in low cunning and meanness.

The hand that opened the door to Felix caught him rudely by the arm and pulled him inside.

"Hold on, there! Don't tear my arm off—I may need it!" cried the boy, trying to disengage himself from the clutch that seemed to grip the bone. "I'm flesh an' blood, not india-rubber. Let go my arm, please."

"Yes, yes," snapped a voice. "I'll let go ov ye whin I want ter. Come ter spy about Mother Canary's house, have ye? Invaded a respectable establishment with dishonest intent, hey? Come in here till I get my peepers onter ye. A boy ye ar', but I don't like boys!"

Felix by this time had concluded that he had already fallen into the hands of the boss virago of the Mulberry street den. The hall was very dimly lighted, and he could make out the outlines of a heavily built woman, nothing more.

"It must be the old witch herself," ejaculated the boy. "I'll know for certain in a minute, I suppose."

He was dragged into a room at one side of the hall, and the light was turned on so that the captor could examine her prize.

"What brought ye hyer, hey?" cried Mother Canary for Felix's captor was the witch of the den. "This is a bad place for spies an' prowlers—a very bad place, my little street Norway. Want a room an' board, hey? We don't keep a orphan asylum."

"If you did there'd be precious few livin' or-

phans about," growled the Boy Spotter under his breath. "But, see here. I don't want a room. Mother Canary, what'd you take to keep a lot o' valuables for a boy o' my size a few days?"

The eyes of the old fence instantly twinkled, and Felix thought that the grip on his arm slightly relaxed.

"I'm no fence," she cried, counterfeiting indignation in an admirable manner. "I keep a respectable house. I—"

"Of course!" interrupted Felix. "That's what I always knowed ye to be, Mother Canary—highly respected an' a woman that never gave anything away. I mean business. There's nothin' slow about me save the watch I prigged this mornin' at the Grand Central Depot. Oho! Mother Canary; if you don't want to deal with me, I kin go down street to Mother Robin."

The grip suddenly tightened again.

"Mother Robin peaches," said the woman.

"What's your name, boy?"

"Gideon Bloss, 'Gutter Gid,' whar I'm best known," answered Felix who did not think it best to give his true name to the old woman.

"The cops never got onto me, Mother Canary. Bet yer life, my Mulberry princess, they never looked further than my buttons. Oh, I'm a daisy with my fingers. How things stick! Whew! ye ought to know Gutter Gid of Mudball Alley."

The boy rounded his sentence with a mysterious whistle that seemed to captivate Mother Canary; her eyes glittered admiringly, and her clutch loosened once more.

"I've got 'er interested," said Felix under his breath. "I guess I know how to bait my hook when I want to catch a shark."

Mother Canary suddenly released the boy and went to the door. Opening it abruptly she looked into the hall to see that the coast was clear, then came back to Felix with avarice and covetousness mingled in her eyes.

"What have ye got?" she said stooping over the boy.

"A dandy lay-out an' don't you forget it," was the answer. "Of course, my darlin', I want to dispose o' the swag whar I kin get the best terms. I work for terms, I do! What have I got? Ah, you'd open your eyes war I to show you the hull lay-out. They don't beat Gutter Gid o' Mudball Alley, mother!"

The woman's patience was well-nigh exhausted.

"Tell me. Where is it?" she cried.

"Whar I kin put hands on it within an hour if you keep the coast clear," answered Felix. "I don't want to land here with a rich layout with a cop on each side o' your door, Mother Canary. It might curtail my future pleasure an' profit, you see."

"I'll fix that," said the old fence. "I'll see that the p'lice never interfere with my friends."

"Mother Canary, ye'r a dandy!" cried Felix. "The man who recommended me to you made no mistake."

"Who recommended you?"

"Billy the Bloke who got shot by the roundsman last week."

"Ah, he was a man!" declared the woman.

"May the man what shot him rot forever above ground!"

"Them's my sentiments, mother. Well, Billy told me. He says, says he: 'When you want a friend, go to Mother Canary, an' haven't I carried out his instructions?'"

Felix thought for a moment that the woman was about to embrace him, and he shrunk from the threatened hug, but the mother of criminals refrained.

"Let me rest here awhile," he said. "Now that we know one another we'll share profits more than once in the times to come. You an' Billy war friends; that's enough for me to know."

Mother Canary made no reply, but went hastily to the door again, and after looking into the hallway for a moment, disappeared altogether, leaving the Boy Spotter alone.

"I guess I'm right," inferred Felix; "but this is a trap an' no mistake. If I don't find out something about that Jersey greenhorn before I see the sidewalk, set me down for a verdant clam. Mother Canary is a tigress with claws untrimmed. I'd sooner be hugged by a grizzly than by her."

Ten minutes passed away, and the vixen of the den did not return. Felix sat on a very dilapidated sofa which was the best piece of furniture in the room and planned his next move. He had gained an entrance to Mother Canary's trap, and he doubted not that the door was locked between him and the street. The house was one of mystery, large, roomy and dangerous, and the young spotter could readily imagine that each separate piece of furniture could, if it

possessed the power of speech, tell some thrilling tale of criminals and crime.

"I feel that I am watched," suddenly passed through the boy's mind, for the very stillness that filled the room was ominous of espionage. "I've felt this way before, an' always when a pair o' eyes war upon me."

Felix had waited a long time for Mother Canary's returning footsteps; but his patience had not been rewarded. He grew uneasy and naturally suspicious, and the belief that a watchful eye was fixed upon him momentarily grew stronger.

Above the door that opened upon the hall was a transom which the boy had not noticed before, and looking up at it cautiously through his lashes he saw—what? A human face and a pair of piercing eyes glaring down upon him!

The boy's first impulse was to jump up, but he mastered himself in a remarkable manner, and sat perfectly still. He knew that the face at the transom was not the benign countenance of Mother Canary; it was the face of a man, clean cut, full of viciousness and lighted up by a pair of penetrating eyes. In some respects it resembled the face of Darius Dodge, but Felix knew it was not, yet he felt certain that he had seen it, or a similar one somewhere.

While he looked it was withdrawn and he was unwatched again.

"In for it," he murmured. "Regarded with suspicion in Mother Canary's den! Felix Fox, you've got to fight it out!"

The next moment the door opened and the old Amazon sprung into the room. She was not alone.

"That's the boy, Mother!" said Mother Canary's companion, a slim man with a short, bushy beard, and apparently forty-five years old. "You let in a scorpion when you opened your door to him."

"A spy—a prowler for the cops, hey?" vociferated the old hag. "I'll show him what it is to spot a respectable female like myself! What d'yer say now, Gutter Gid?"

"Gutter Gid?" echoed the man, with a very devilish chuckle. "Thet's the name he gave ye, is it, mother? Why, thet young snipe is Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter ov New York!"

Felix had no time in which to escape the itching fingers of Mother Canary. She pounced upon him with a half-human cry and jerked him from the floor.

"Ye've come to yer tomb, spy!" she cried, as her fingers seemed to sink through the boy's clothes into his flesh. "Won't I show him that it's death to spot Mother Canary, hey? Git out o' my track!" she cried to the man. "The blue-coats shall look in vain for the young imp!"

She moved toward the door like a mad fury, with the boy in her grasp.

To struggle was useless. Felix felt himself on the verge of the other world.

"Hold!—one moment, Mother," called out the man, laying his hand on the fury's arm.

"Do you plead for him?" she cried. "Well, ye'r the last man I thought'd do that. No! a diamond mine wouldn't save the cops' spy!" and she broke from the man's clutches and rushed like a tigress into the hall.

Mother Canary kept one hand at Felix's throat and swept down the corridor like a storm.

At the end of it she kicked a door wide open and plunged on until met by another door, which she served in a like manner, disclosing this time a flight of steps which seemed to lead into a cellar. Down into the darkness Mother Canary went with her victim.

"Heaven help me!" gasped Felix. "I am caught in the jaws of a death-trap!"

CHAPTER V.

THE POINTER AT PLAY.

THREE men were seated in the office of Sharpe and Dodge, Great American Estate Detectives, on the Bowery.

Two of the three were the members of the firm, the third was a slender man, smooth-faced and keen-looking, and bore a striking resemblance to Darius Dodge, only he was taller than that individual.

The hour was about eleven o'clock of the same night that witnessed the events recorded in the previous chapters of our story.

"Are you sure, Hicks, that the boy is thoroughly out of the way?" asked Silas Sharpe, turning to the man who was not his partner.

"Sure of it?" was the laughing rejoinder, and the speaker tipped his chair back and elevated his cigar while he blew a cloud of white smoke ceilingward. "When did you ever know Mother Canary to do a thing in a bungling manner?"

"We never did," admitted Silas Sharpe, answering for his partner as well as for himself.

"Never," echoed Darius Dodge.

"Then, never doubt that the young spotter isn't attended to. It was a lucky thing that I got onto him on his way to the trap. If I hadn't, he'd have hoodwinked Mother Canary completely; he was doin' it up brown when I ran him down an' spoiled one of the cutest games ever thought out in a boy's noggin. Oh, they don't get ahead of the Pointer, *alias* Hicks Kelly."

Sharpe and Dodge looked extremely pleased.

"It was lucky that you run onto the young chap," observed Darius; "and we were lucky to draw the golden pigeon from Jersey into our net. There's no mistake about the papers, Hicks; they're genuine, and ready, and all that. What we want now is a new Omri Otway; don't you see?"

"Certainly," assented the Pointer. "What's the boodle worth?"

"Oh, there's plenty for three," laughed Sharpe. "These English estates, when they are good, pan out wonderfully, and the Morley estate is a famous one. But the new Omri Otway? We must have him, and the sooner we put our hands on him the sooner we clutch the guineas. You understand, Hicks?"

"I'm no post!" exclaimed Hicks Kelly, who was familiarly known as the Pointer, the man famous for finding "missing men."

"Have you a new heir in your mind?"

"By heavens, I have!" he exclaimed. "What will this Jersey pigeon weigh?"

"About one hundred and sixty," Sharpe answered.

"His age?"

"He was nineteen yesterday, he told us."

"Suits my boy to a T. Green?"

"As a gourd," laughed Sharpe and Dodge in concert.

"I have the counterfeit, gentlemen," announced the Pointer, seriously and confidently. "He'll not need much coachin' for he's played deep games before. Then there needn't be much trouble with *this* case."

"Not much, Hicks. We win by the papers more than by the boy. You see, we may have to take the heir across the pond to settle matters an' get his 'John Hancock' upon certain papers in the courts there. But, what about this girl—this Rosa you call her—whom Felix Fox sometimes visits, an' to whom he may confide his plans? We want no stumblin' blocks in our way, Hicks. We've got the Jersey pigeon, an' the New York ferret, in a cage from which escape is impossible, an' we want no halt anywhere along the line. What if Felix Fox told Rosa that he was goin' to Mother Canary's for the purpose of findin' out what had become of the representative of Greenblade society—what if he has done this?"

"I'll take charge of the girl," reassured Hicks Kelly. "Leave her to me. If Felix has told her this, I'll see to it that she doesn't give us any trouble."

"Do you think he told her?" asked Darius Dodge showing symptoms of uneasiness if not real alarm.

"I really do not know, but never let a thought of that kind break your honest slumbers, gentlemen. Leave all that to Hicks Kelly the Pointer. I found the other man to-day."

"What other man?" exclaimed the conspirators.

"The old merchant whose mysterious disappearance has kept a Pennsylvania county in an uproar for a month."

"Where was he?"

"In a well."

"Dead?"

"Hang it all!—dead as a door nail!"

"But you get a reward?"

"Only fifty dollars," growled the Pointer.

"I agreed to find him alive for six hundred. I had him all right up to last night. He was flighty, but alive all the same. But, hang it all, I say! Why didn't I know there was a hidden well in that infernal old cellar? I felt like tossin' the corpse into the river an' let it find its own way home."

Hicks Kelly got up, bit his cigar in two in a passion, and threw one end savagely at a much-missed spittoon in the middle of the room.

"The next time I'll look out for cellars beforehand, bet your life!" he growled, picking up his hat. "Well, gents, the game moves briskly on."

"To-morrow, if nothin' happens, I'll show you the new Omri Otway."

"All right; but attend to the girl."

"Leave that to me," repeating his words for the third time, and with a bow, the Pointer whisked out of sight.

At the head of the stairs, a few steps from the conspirators' office, he stopped and looked

back with a sardonic smile, which might not have rested easily on the minds of Sharpe and Dodge could they have seen it.

"A double team of concentrated rascality," chuckled Hicks Kelly. "I'd pit Silas Sharpe and Darius Dodge ag'in' any two princes in Tophet. Schemes that never entered Satan's noggin creep into theirs with the sublimest ease. You've got the documents, gentlemen; Mother Kelly's got the boy. I must see that this game isn't given away. It's the adroitest thing I've dipped into for many a long day." And down the steps he went with the agility of a man who had not passed the forty-fifth milestone of life.

The Pointer was a shrewd one and evidently knew his business. The facility with which he found missing men had given him a certain reputation which was not confined to the great city; he often received flattering offers to go elsewhere to trace missing people, but he invariably returned the reply that New York was his work-ground, and he would not go away to find any one.

The reader no longer doubts, of course, that Hicks Kelly was in league with Sharpe and Dodge in more than one rascality. To state the plain truth right here, the three had worked together for years, and had shared the profits of numerous villainies which, if unearthed, would have landed the guilty trio in Sing Sing.

"Attend to the girl, hey?" ejaculated the Pointer, as he hurried up the street after leaving Sharpe and Dodge to their reflections. "Well, I'm the daisy to do that! Now that Felix is out of the way, I will have leisure to reach my goal. He was a thorn in my side, that young spotter was. Ho, ho! I wonder if Omri Otway's Jersey kin will ever call on me to hunt him up?"

Hicks Kelly kept on, evidently with a definite object in view, until he reached Hester street, and found himself in front of the building occupied by Rosa Reed, the sewing-girl. Looking up he mentally counted the windows far above him, and all at once uttered an exclamation of delight.

"She's up yet, at work," he said, half-aloud. "She works nearly all night sometimes. I'll go an' see. I want to get on the trail Sharpe an' Dodge suggested awhile ago. I've got to 'tend to the girl—that's my share of the work for the present. After awhile, Hicks Kelly, Esquire, you'll take a new tack."

Late as the hour was the Pointer entered the building and climbed the stairs that led to the little room which was Rosa's home and in which she made enough at the little machine to keep soul and body together. There was something mean in the sight of Hicks Kelly climbing up to that humble abode in the dark watches of that midsummer night. It looked like the hawk stealing upon the nest of the dove.

He reached the proper landing at last, and stole on tiptoe to the sewing girl's door. There, like a spy, he applied his ear near the jamb and listened for several minutes. The only sound he heard was the hum of the sewing machine which told him that Rosa was wide awake.

Hesitating awhile longer, the Pointer tapped lightly. The hum of the machine was checked at once.

"Felix!—back safe!" exclaimed a voice, as somebody bounded toward the door.

"To Tartarus with Felix an' I guess he's thar by this time," grated Hicks Kelly, as the knob turned.

The next moment the door was pulled open and the rays of the girl's sewing lamp fell full on the schemer's face.

"You? Heaven! It is midnight. I can't see you now!" cried Rose, turning ashen.

"But one moment, girl. I called in passing. I saw your light. I have somethin' to say. I—"

"No—no! Not at this late hour. Not to-night, Hicks Kelly!" and the door was shut in his face.

Instantly the face of the Pointer grew dark with rage, his eyes seemed to blaze, and he straightened with an oath which he fairly hissed forth. A key turned in the lock as the curse dropped from his tongue.

"Lock your door in my face, eh? By heavens! that's cool! I've a notion to interview you in spite o' yourself, my Hester street lily!"

He lifted a clinched hand and looked for a moment as if he was to shatter the door with it, but all at once he altered his mind and turned toward the stairway.

"You've shut your door for the first an' last time in the Pointer's face, Rosa!" he hissed. "Before the week's out you may have no door to shut at all!"

And down the steps he went, the pictur-

of vicious rage, and from the pavement glared up at the lighted window, and cursed the girl again.

Once more Hicks Kelly set out on a night tramp and this time he did not pause until he entered a frame house on Canal street and shook a figure lying in bed.

"Hello! is it you, Hicks?" exclaimed the person rising and rubbing his eyes.

"It's nobody else, Toby," was the answer in ill-mood. "I've got a new job for you. Do you think you can play the greeny an' the heir to a bouncin' estate across the pond?"

"Jehosaphat! you don't mean it, Hicks?"

"I don't mean anything else. It's a scheme, I tell you, Toby. You must become Omri Otway. I'll give you the cues."

"All right. I'm your heir, Hicks. Give me the pointers an' I'll show 'em a game that'll bring down the house!"

Kelly and the boy laughed together.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE THAN A "PIGEON."

It is not our intention to lose sight of innocent Omri Otway for whose welfare the reader is doubtless much concerned.

We left the boy in the house of Mother Canary, and thither we must go to find him.

The bed that came up from the dark depths beneath the floor of Omri's bedroom did not contain the form of the boy who had flung himself upon it in a half-unconscious state a short time before. He had fallen into the hands of a brace of sharpers and was suffering the consequences.

Mother Canary knew what she was doing when she caused the bed and its occupant to be lowered by the assistance of unseen machinery; and her eyes shone with triumph of the most cruel nature.

When the boy came to his senses he had a severe headache and found himself lying on a pallet beneath which was the damp ground.

He barely remembered having flung himself upon a decent bed; but here he was with two torn blankets between him and the earth, and surrounded by pitch darkness.

"In the name of Heaven, where am I?" cried the half-bewildered Omri. "This is not the farm-house near Greenblade. Merciful heavens! into what kind of a trap have I tumbled head-long? Ah! I recollect. I came to New York—I went to Sharp and Dodge's office—I accompanied Silas Sharpe to his hotel." He sprang up. "Where are my papers—the proofs of my heirship? I have lost them! I have been robbed!"

Yes, hoodwinked and robbed, Omri, and in the hands of one of the witches of the great city.

"This is not the room I went to sleep in!" he went on. "I am lyin' next to the damp ground. I am under ground—in a cellar!"

He rushed forward with his hands in front of him, and brought up suddenly against an almost smooth stone wall. An exclamation of horror burst from his throat. He was indeed under ground.

Not a ray of light penetrated the place to show the young Jerseyan its dimensions. A chill took possession of his heart.

He felt his way along the four walls of the underground dungeon, and came back to his pallet with a faint heart. His trip had not disclosed even the semblance of a door.

"I'd kick a door down if I found one, but there isn't any," he said. "I am shut up in one of those doorless dungeons I have read about, but which I believed never existed. Am I to die here?"

"I shouldn't be surprised, my Jersey pigeon," said a voice in the room above, and Mother Canary rose from listening at a certain place in the floor. "I've got my orders, an' I know what to do. No flies escape from this trap. It's the best institution of its kind in this city. I defy any one to get out if I say 'No.' It can't be did, my emerald victim. Oh! Mother Canary is a power when she wants to do a certain thing."

Poor Omri! He could only stand in the darkness and count the throbs of his heart. Three times he set out around the walls of his prison in search of a door, but each time he came back to his pallet disappointed.

The manner of his entrance to the dungeon never entered his head. Born and raised in the country, he had had no chance to learn the tricks and crimes of the villains who infest the cities; but he had had his eyes opened in this respect. There seemed no escape for him.

Meanwhile, Mother Canary had left the room above, and had answered the little bell jingling in the hall. The old fence did not have many visitors, but those who did come to the house in-

variably came "on business." The night of startling events had passed away, and it was nine o'clock in the morning when Mother Canary responded to the summons of her bell!

Her visitor on this occasion was Mr. Silas Sharpe himself, and as the door was cautiously pulled open, he slipped past the woman and turned upon her in the hall.

"Well, how goes it?" he asked, a great deal of eagerness in his tones.

"Fairly, fairly, Silas," answered Mother Canary with a meanful grin. "Two flies instead of one dropped into the trap last night. The last one was no green jacket from Jersey."

"So Hicks says. He was tryin' to hoodwink you, Mother, when the Pointer happened to drop in?"

"Tryin' to, yes; but I wasn't goin' to be hoodwinked. They don't fool Mother Canary, Silas. He was a cute one, though. The cops sent him here."

"No," said Silas Sharpe very seriously. "Mother Canary, that boy came here to find out what had become of the pigeon from Jersey."

"No!"

"Fact it is, by the golden rod!"

"How did he know he was here?"

"He must have seen me fetch him up. That young spotter is a caution; there's the makin' of our worst enemy in him."

"If he isn't frosted in the bud, eh, Silas?" laughed the woman. "Well, see here," and her hand fell upon Silas Sharpe's arm. "When Felix Fox becomes our enemy, let me know, will you? Notify me by postal card, please, or drop me a line by letter."

There was a horrible grin of triumph at the corners of Mother Canary's mouth, a gleam of satisfaction in her eyes.

"You've fixed him, then?" asked Silas Sharpe. Why the question? Mother Canary's countenance told him enough.

"I fix 'em all when I have orders," the woman said.

"All right. Now I want to see the other one."

"The Jersey pigeon?"

"Yes."

The proprietress of the Mulberry street trap stared in amazement at Silas Sharpe. The request to her was a very uncommon one.

"He's in the fool's chamber," said the woman. "The only way to it is by the trap you know."

"Well, I'll go down by the trap, then. I must see him mother; the success of our scheme may hang on this visit."

"Come then. You don't want to see the Boy Spotter?"

"No, hang him! I want nothin' to do with him; that's yours an' the Pointer's business."

Mother Canary led Silas Sharpe into a small room revealed but poorly by a few rays of light that struggled in at a curtained window.

"That corner there," she said pointing to a certain corner. "Ah, you know where it is, Silas; you've been there before."

The Bowery shark knew the place for he had stepped into the corner designated by the woman who went to the wall and touched a button well hidden by the dark papering.

The next moment the floor in the corner began to descend without the least noise, and Silas Sharpe disappeared while Mother Canary eyed him. The infamous house seemed alive with "traps."

Darius Dodge's partner in infamy was carried several feet below the level floor by the trap when it stopped and he leaped from it.

"What was that? I heard something," said a voice in the darkness.

The reply was the snap and the flash of a match and Omri Otway sprang forward with a cry, and alighted in front of Silas Sharpe.

"You have found me! Oh! thank fortune!" exclaimed the young Jerseyan, as the money shark took a wax candle from his pocket and proceeded to light it. "What kind of a house am I in? Do you really board at this kind of a hotel, Silas Sharpe?"

"Circumstances make strange bedfellows," answered the deep-dyed villain, sticking the candle into a crevice in the wall.

"You have come to take me to a better place, haven't you? I tell you, Silas, that old woman is a perfect devil. She hasn't got those dancin' eyes for nothin'. I'm not worth much, but I expect to be one o' these days, an' I'd give it all to have my hands at her throat for just one minute!"

The boy drew himself up as he spoke, till Mr. Silas Sharpe thought he would sooner see the Jerseyan's hands at Mother Canary's throat than at his own.

"Where are my papers?" continued Omri.

"Secure in our burglar-proof safe," was the answer. "I stole a march on the party that put you here. I want some information about yourself, Omri. It will help us secure the estate justly yours in England. Now, when were you born?"

The boy fixed his eyes on the rascal in amazement.

"Take me out o' here first," he said. "Take me back to your office an' I'll tell you all I know."

"I can't, just now. It is daylight, you see, an' I am here by stealin' a march on your persecutor. The information I must have at once. We must cable our agent in London right away, sayin' that we have found you an' givin' date of birth, an' so forth."

"I'm in no pushin' hurry for that fortune," retorted Omri, whose eyes had been partly opened by his late adventures. "I prefer to talk in your office, not in this dungeon. You didn't come in by a door, Mr. Sharpe, for there ain't any."

Silas Sharpe bit his lip, and gave the boy a mad look from behind his heavy lashes.

"If I could only convince you of the importance of havin' the truth in London yet to-day, you would gladly tell me. Let me see, you were born in the year—"

The rascal looked at the victim, expecting him to finish the sentence.

"I've made up my mind; not a word here!" was the determined reply.

Sharpe with difficulty kept back a tremendous oath. He had met a repulse where he expected to gain a substantial victory.

"I'm sorry to say that you can't get out o' here until you tell me what I want to know," he said, taking another tack.

"I can't, hey?" cried the boy.

"I'm very sorry to say it, Omri."

For a full minute the rascal's victim stood silent before Silas, and the look that by degrees came into his eyes made the money shark recoil an inch.

"Your London agent must wait a while," Omri remarked, at last. "I've made up my mind that there's some shenanigan about this. Some-how-or-other, you fetched me to a very bad house. You are on good terms with the she ranther that runs it, an' you call it a 'hotel.' I don't believe that a man o' your stylish git-up, Silas Sharpe, boards at a place o' this kind. I've never been to New York, before, but I've seen city fellars jes' like you spendin' summers at Greenblade, an' they always stop at the best hotel there."

"You don't mean to intimate that I stand in with the person who put you here?" exclaimed Silas Sharpe trying to frighten the country boy with a show of anger.

"You fetched me here when there must be a thousand more respectable boarding-houses in New York," was the reply. "You placed me in the power of this tigress. Prove that you are my friend by takin' me out o' this trap right away."

"I don't poke my nose into unnecessary danger," said Sharpe.

"Then, Omri Otway will rot here before he gives any information away."

"Oh, you will, eh?" hissed Silas Sharpe and his hand dropped heavily upon the boy's shoulder. "You'll regret it if you act stubborn, Omri. You'd like to go back to Greenblade rich—I know you would. You can only obtain the great Morley estate through the hands of Silas Sharpe an' Darius Dodge."

"Then, by Jupiter! I don't want it!" exclaimed Omri. "You stand in with Mother Canary because you came down into this hole in the ground from above. I heard you alight. Look here, Silas Sharpe, I look like a natural born fool, but I ain't one. I'll get my share of the fortune without your help, an' if I kin, I'll send somebody up for a confounded dirty piece of work. An', right here I'll begin by chokin' you, Silas Sharpe!"

The Bowery villain made an effort to avoid the boy, but he was not quick enough. Omri Otway sprang at him with the ferocity of a young tiger and his hands reached his throat under the waxed mustache before he could beat them down.

The attack was the work of a second, but the boy's hands did not tighten before Silas Sharpe had sent up a wild cry for succor.

"Help! help! For heaven's sake, help me, Canary!"

"That tigress had better keep her distance!" cried Omri while Silas struggled. "I want to get my fingers between collar an' chin!"

At that moment Sharpe fell against the wax candle sticking in the wall and extinguished it.

"I guess that's enough for this time," cried the boy, releasing his well-choked victim. "You know that Omri Otway is no pet rabbit, Silas Sharpe. You kin coax him into a trap, but you must not enter yourself to play with him."

Sharpe, half-unconscious, in staggering back fell against an object that sent a thrill through his frame. It was the trap which had been lowered for his help.

With a last effort of strength, he drew himself up on the platform, and was whisked upward without noise.

Mother Canary sprung to the Bowery rogue with an exclamation of horror.

"Kill 'im! do it to-day!" grated Silas, looking up into her eyes. "He choked me! He's a young tiger, an' almighty dangerous. He wouldn't give me a bit o' information!" and he staggered across the room, showing plainly the effects of the terrible choking he had received. His eyes seemed ready to start from his head.

Mother Canary turned and followed him.

"Brandy! brandy!" cried the villain as he gained the hall. "I'll have more than pigeon feathers for this!"

The hag of the trap sprung away to carry out the fiercely-vociferated order, and when she came back she found him lying insensible on the floor. As she bent over him the bell jingled again and she rushed toward the door.

"It's me, Mother," whispered a voice without, and a moment later Hicks Kelly stood on the scene.

"The pigeon did that," said the woman, pointing at Sharpe.

"A pigeon?" laughed the Pointer. "I'd say a tiger!"

CHAPTER VII.

A DANGEROUS Foe AT LARGE.

"THIS is a trap that is a trap. By the sacred spoons! it looks as if I've got more than I bargained for. Mother Canary is no spring pullet. I knew that before I poked my nose into her shanty an' I've had my belief confirmed. The man who gave me away had Hicks Kelly's eyes. It must have been the Pointer. I'll get even with 'em all. I'll show the whole lay-out that Felix Fox is more than a boy when they get him against 'em."

Of course the youth who spoke thus was the Boy Spotter, the young detective who had tried to hoodwink Mother Kelly, but who had got caught for his pains.

He leaned against a stone wall in pitch darkness and in the midst of profound silence. Mother Kelly had carried him down a flight of steps, and had flung him forward with all her might.

By the merest chance Felix had missed falling against a wall of stone; he fell at the foot of it with his brain in a whirl and nearly unconscious. He had ample opportunity to reflect over his adventure, but reflection did not change his mind. He was still resolved to help Omri Otway out of his troubles and to baffle the villainous gang pitted against him.

He was certain that he was not far from the Jersey boy. The same roof was doubtless over both; and both were in Mother Canary's trap.

"I'll see what the chances are for gettin' out o' this black trap," continued Felix, now fully recovered. "Somebody's chucklin' over my misfortune on the Bowery, an' Rosa wonders where I am. Crow while ye kin, my money sharks. That'll be a fly time when I get on the trail again!"

Felix was feeling the walls of the dungeon when a strange sound struck his ears. He stopped and listened.

"Help!—help!" he heard. "Help me, Mother Canary!"

The sounds came through the wall and, but he knew it not, from the lips of Silas Sharpe, who had been attacked by Omri, the Jersey "pigeon."

"That's not a boy's voice," ejaculated Felix. "A scuffle of some kind is goin' on somewhere an' also under ground. There! all is still now. I'd give five dollars to know what that meant."

He listened a while longer, but the cries were not repeated; they died away as suddenly as they began.

The boy went back to his task. For an hour he felt the walls of his prison with his hands. Not a square inch of surface escaped his inquiry. After the walls he went to the ground and crept slowly over it searching it thoroughly.

Near one corner his fingers touched a piece of plank which stuck above the surface. It was old and very much decayed, and was not much to build hopes on, but Felix resolved to investigate it.

The ground was rather soft and damp, and the Boy Spotter dug with his fingers until he got a good grip on the plank, when he braced himself against the wall and pulled with all his strength.

"I'll pull the universe up but what I get at the bottom of this thing," he exclaimed as he tugged away. "I'll make it hotter than ninety proof cayenne pepper for you, my daisy plot-ter!"

The stubborn plank yielded at last and Felix unearthed a hole large enough to squeeze his body into. He determined this by feeling, for he had no matches, and his keen eyes were of no use amid that gloom.

When he had rested a while, Felix lowered himself into the opening disclosed by the lifting of the old plank.

"An old sewer pipe, by Jupiter!" burst from his throat. "I've crawled through 'em before, but here's one that's been abandoned for years, an' there's no tellin' where it will take me. I'm off for a trial, an' I'll see you later, Mother Canary!"

The pipe was moldy and not one of the largest size, but it was large enough to accommodate the body of the Boy Spotter, and he began to crawl through it, all the time on the outlook for a terminus that would let him ascend to some safer place.

Judging from the time occupied by his creep through darkness, Felix thought he must have passed from under Mother Canary's trap, when he fell out of the pipe, having reached the end.

Fortunately he did not fall far, and when he recovered, he could stand erect and feel a floor above his head.

"Another cellar," said Felix. "I hope I've hit a place that will give me liberty. I'm achin' to show Mother Canary a trick that'll open her eyes. No stolen goods 'lay' next time, my Mulberry street seraph."

Felix tried the floor above, but found it pretty solid.

"Say, an' thar any rats about the premises, Jacob?" suddenly said a voice.

"Rats? Gott in himmel! nix!" was the reply.

"Vy you ask 'bout rats, Carl?"

"Because thar's one under the floor."

"Vell, dot peats Yawcob Blinks's dime all ter pieces! Rats under dis house? Vy, vere did you hear 'im, Carl?"

"Right under my chair."

"Ve'll haf to see inter dat rat peeseness."

And something very like an elephant walked across the floor above the boy's head.

"Jacob Blinks? I know that Dutchman," mused Felix. "He's the only honest man near Mother Canary's trap."

"Move yer chair, Carl. There peeze an old trap under it," continued the Teuton. "Ve'll inquire inter dis rat peeseness."

Felix Fox awaited developments with bated breath; he drew back partly into the sewer-pipe while Jacob Blinks operated with a hatchet overhead.

Suddenly the sounds ceased and a trap was lifted.

"Now, vere's dot rat?" exclaimed Jacob, thrusting his head into the hole.

"Here, Jacob! I'm the boss Norway o' New York!" laughed the Boy Spotter, so suddenly that the Dutchman drew back with a loud cry.

"A poy, py gracious!" he cried. "Vell, Carl, dat's de biggest rat Yawcob Blinks ever ketch—hey, mynheer?"

Jacob's drawing back enabled Felix to seize the edge of the floor above, and the next moment he drew himself into the little tap-room with a dexterity that brought the German's customers to their feet.

The boy presented a funny appearance, covered as he was with the grime and mold of the abandoned sewer. He did not look more than half human, but his eyes, full of triumph, proclaimed him a very intelligent specimen of humanity.

"Vere you been? Vat you mean crawlin' under my house, hey?" cried Jacob, seizing the boy.

"Don't you know me, Jacob? Let me get a little o' this dirt off my face—"

"Shoot me for a pretzel, ef it ain't Felix Fox! der young rascal vat finds dings out! Coom dis way, poy! Go an' wash yerself, an' den I'll introduce you to my coostomers. Felix Fox, hey! hey! Carl thought it vas a rat under der house!"

Felix was very glad when the proprietor of the saloon thrust him out of it into a small room where there was a wash basin, a dirty towel and a brush. He attacked the water at once, and afterward manipulated the brush.

"I don't want to see your customers, Jacob," he said to himself. "If I must know them, I'll

let you introduce me later. Thanks, my dear Jacob, an' good-by."

The Boy Spotter opened a door that was handy, and sprung into a hall. The next moment he was in the street, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and the last person that the inmates of Mother Canary's wanted to see at large.

"There never was a trap that held this gutter-snipe long," he laughed, looking up and down the street from under his hat. "Hello! there they go, shoulder to shoulder—two of the meanest scoundrels that infest this city!"

Yes, indeed. The keen eyes of the Boy Spotter had detected Mr. Silas Sharpe walking down Mulberry street, in company with no less a personage than the Pointer! Silas was still "pale about the gills," for Mother Canary's fiery brandy had restored him to consciousness.

It was worth much for the boy to see those two worthies together, for it confirmed his belief that they were conspirators in more than one dark plot, and especially the one against Omri Otway, the Jersey pigeon. They could afford to be seen together now, for were not Felix Fox and the country boy in the Mulberry street trap? And where was the person who had ever escaped from Mother Canary's clutches?

Felix followed the two men, and gradually drew near them, but exercised a great deal of caution.

"It does me good to keep my peepers on you," he ejaculated under his breath. "Won't there be a time when the she-lizard behind me discovers that Felix Fox is missin'? Ho, ho! my delectable daisies of the Bowery fields. Ar' you certain of the pigeon's feathers still?"

Felix followed the couple until they turned into the Bowery, and then, certain that they were proceeding to the office of Sharpe and Dodge, he turned back and hurried away.

"In the first place, I must let Rosa know that I'm out o' the trap," he decided; so he quickened his gait, and did not stop until he stood on the floor on which Rosa Reed, the sewing-girl, had her home.

A few quick strides carried him to the door, and he was about to open it when a placard, bearing the words "For rent," stared him in the face.

The Boy Spotter recoiled with a cry as if Mother Canary had risen in front of him.

"Jehu! what does this mean?" he exclaimed, springing like a young tiger at the door.

"It means just what it says, boy," said a man who had opened a door behind Felix. "The girl who lived in there went off this mornin'."

"But she didn't give up the room?"

"Her friend did, for her. She went off about seven o'clock this mornin', an' he came with a letter from her to the agent for the house, saying that she didn't want the room any longer. Her friend fetched a dray with him, and took all the furniture away."

Felix heard these tidings like a person stunned. What! Rosa gone?

"What was this friend like?—who was he?" he suddenly demanded.

"I didn't see him. He didn't stay five minutes, they say."

"You'll let me look into the room, won't you?"

"I haven't any key, but there's the transom," said the man.

Felix, with the assistance of a chair brought from the opposite room, looked into Rosa's little chamber, and found the man's story true. It was entirely empty.

"Gone she is!" he said, grating his teeth. "The 'friend' business is an infamous fraud—a part of the game. I'll bet my eyes that I can spot the villain whose hand is deepest in this. By heavens! I'll make you settle a big bill one of these days, Hicks Kelly!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PICKING UP THE TRAIL.

FELIX FOX walked away with his mind in a turmoil. He had escaped from Mother Canary's trap, and had reached Rosa's home too late to save her from some new and terrible danger.

"She has fallen into the Pointer's power—I know it!" he ejaculated. "He has taken advantage of my forced absence an' is playin' what he thinks to be a trump card. Look out for number one, Mr. Kelly."

The remainder of the day the boy occupied in what turned out to be at sundown a vain attempt to get upon Hicks Kelly's trail. That shrewd rascal was not to be found at his usual haunts and Felix searched the city pretty thoroughly for him.

But not in his usual garb did the boy detective prosecute his search. He was so well disguised that the keen eyes of the Pointer could not have recognized him even if he had been on the lookout.

Omri Otway was not forgotten.

"I'll attend to your case after dark, my Jersey pigeon," concluded Felix, thinking of Sharpe and Dodge's victim. "I must get trace of Rosa first. I hardly think that Mother Canary will shut your wind off just yet. When I get fairly at your case, I'll make things hum."

Night came, but no traces of the missing girl. Felix was perplexed and mad.

"Hang it all!" he exclaimed. "Maybe I'll find the whole three together." And down he went to the vicinity of Sharpe and Dodge's quarters on the Bowery and crept up the stairs to the main office of the villainous pair.

Here was another disappointment and surprise.

Felix tiptoed to the door and beheld upon it in newly printed big letters the words:

"TO LET!"

"INQUIRE AT NO. — GRAND STREET!"

Felix's eyes seemed ready to leap from his head.

"Here's another runaway!" he cried. "Rosa gone, Sharpe an' Dodge gone. Is it a coincidence? By Jupiter! it's more than that. No.—Grand street, eh? There's where I'm goin'!"

It was not far to the place designated by the placard and the boy found the owner of the building, lately occupied by the conspirators—a shrewd business little man, whose mind was wholly absorbed by the question of dollars and cents.

"I notice that the office lately occupied by Sharpe an' Dodge, Great American Estate Detectives is empty."

"Yes. Have you got me a renter?" cried the owner eagerly.

"Do I look like a renter's agent?" cried Felix. "I hope I'll never get down to that. No, I have no renter for you, but I won't say when I may not have one. But Sharpe an' Dodge were doin' some business for me an' I want to know where they've gone to."

"I don't follow my renters after they depart. Of course I'm sorry to let 'em go, my boy, but I never keep track of 'em, hopin' to coax 'em back. That's not my style."

"You don't know, then?"

"No, and I don't care. Good-night, sir."

Felix looked at the man and—did not depart. "They left suddenly, didn't they?" he ventured.

"Well, yes. Mr. Dodge came here late last night and said that they might vacate before long, but Sharpe comes in about noon to-day, and says that they had to go at once."

"Short notice," remarked the boy.

"Shorter than I like, especially when it loses me good patrons," growled the man.

Felix turned away.

"Short notice, had to go, good renters," he murmured, as he passed out into the street. "Things are gettin' interestin'. Upon the heels of Rosa's disappearance Sharpe an' Dodge pull up stakes an' move off. Pleasanter fields than the Bowery suddenly discovered, I presume."

Once among the lamps of Grand street, Felix collected his thoughts and walked slowly away.

"I'd give my neck for a trace of one of three men—I care not which one just now," he said. "Why not go back to Mother Canary's an' put the old trap under guard? A bee always comes back to its hive, an' Mother Canary's is the hive for the three rascals who have conspired to pluck the Jersey pigeon."

Back to Mulberry street went the Boy Spotter, wishing a thousand times that he was at the heels of Hicks Kelly, or Silas Sharpe.

Just opposite Mother Canary's was a two-story frame building, the main lower room of which was a store for the sale of second-hand clothing, and the moment that Felix drew near to choose a place for guard, he was pounced upon by a dark-faced man whose fingers seemed to sink into his arm the instant they touched it.

"Ze poy vat takes mines clo'dings las' night!" squealed the old clo' merchant as he drew Felix toward him. "I have ze young varmin' at last."

Felix straightened and drew back indignant. "See here, sir! Don't you call me a thief, you Scum o' Jewry!" he exclaimed. "There's nothin' in your shop I'd have on my back. Let me go!"

"I send ye to ze Island. Dat vill be peezeness. Vere you sell mine clodings, eh? Take 'em to Mother Robin, hey?"

Mother Robin was Mother Canary's rival in the nefarious business of receiving stolen goods,

and a great deal of jealousy existed between the two women.

"Hang your clothin'!" shouted Felix. "If you pull me into your store, you'll have a bull in a china shop before you're through with me."

The Jew laughed derisively, and continued to drag the boy toward the door, despite his struggles to free himself.

When on the very threshold of the shop, Felix happened to throw a glance across the street, and saw Mother Canary's door open and a man emerge.

He didn't resemble either Hicks Kelly, Silas Sharpe or Darius Dodge; but who else would visit the trap at that hour?

Felix made a desperate effort to get away, and was successful.

He broke from the Jew's grasp and bounded away.

"Stop dat young thief! He takes mine clodings!" yelled the Israelite, but Felix was far beyond his clutches, and a few bounds carried him across the street.

He thought he would recognize the man who had just left the Mulberry street trap, but he soon found that he had lost precious time in getting away from the Jew. There were many people on the street, and the boy hurried along scrutinizing all and confident that he would know Mother Canary's late visitor.

Two squares away, or at the junction of Mulberry with another street, he saw a man throw up his hand and whistle to attract the driver of a horse-car.

"That's him!" ejaculated Felix. "That's the man who came out o' the trap awhile ago. I'll just spot you, my daisy."

The car that came along was much crowded, but the man who was tall, well-shouldered and had a full beard, crowded his way upon the rear platform, and leaned against the dash beside the conductor.

Felix ran nimbly forward, and with his hat crushed over his eyes hung on to the steps, but did not seem to take any notice of the man he was shadowing.

For some time there was a doubt in the boy's mind as to the identity of his man, but before the car had proceeded three squares, he had mentally dubbed him the renowned Silas Sharpe! Felix saw that the real mustache of that individual had been combed down among the full false beard, and that he wore clothes entirely different in shade and texture affected by the head of the fortune-hunting firm.

The car jogged on, with Silas Sharpe watched by his young enemy.

"I want to know where you've located, thet's all," murmured Felix. "Before long, Mr. Silas Sharpe, I propose to have some very important business with you an' your cronies in crime."

All at once Sharpe made a dash for the steps. Felix saw his movement just in time, and swinging alongside the car, let him pass.

He started immediately for the sidewalk, dogged by the boy, landed on the curb with a springy step, and started off at a brisk gait.

Felix, familiar with every part of the great city, knew the street and the vicinity.

"You're a shrewd one, Silas. I wouldn't have looked for you here," laughed the boy, keeping close at his heels. "Ha! there you go—into the new hawk's nest. I think I've located the new quarters of Sharpe an' Dodge, Great Estate Fleecers."

Silas Sharpe had dodged into a hallway, and Felix, who reached the place a moment later, heard his feet on the stairs.

Then the boy stepped back, looked at the number and recorded it on his mind.

He had tracked Silas Sharpe down, and felt that he had achieved a victory. It was a long chase, but he had succeeded.

"Now I'll attend to you, Jersey boy," he murmured as he turned back. "We'll see whose fingers will hang longest to the gold-feathers with the diamond tips."

Felix took no car, but walked fast. The car jaunt had rested him.

If he had looked over his shoulder he would have seen a man on his track. At last he did so, when a thrill shot to his heart.

"Good heavens! Hicks Kelly!" he exclaimed, and plunged down the first alley he struck.

CHAPTER IX.

"BY THE BUTTON."

HICKS KELLY was somewhat surprised to have the boy thus escape him. At first he thought of darting after him, but, considering that Felix knew the alley better than he did, he refrained and kept on but with a slightly increased gait.

Felix Fox was now reassured that the Pointer knew where Silas Sharpe and his partner had located and he was certain that when he wanted the swindling pair he could find them. He only feared that Hicks Kelly had recognized him, and that he would tell Silas Sharpe that he (Felix) had dogged his steps from Mother Canary's.

The boy kept down the alley to the next street and there debated what to do next. He had shadowed Silas Sharpe to the new office and had seen and lost the Pointer, the one man who could lead him to Rosa's new quarters.

"They're pullin' together yet, ain't they?" he said to himself. "I could astonish Sharpe an' Dodge by appearin' suddenly to 'em, but I sha'n't. The next step is to find that Jersey boy. No failure this time—no bringin' up in a cellar an' an escape through an old sewer. Can I hoodwink Mother Canary after my failure? Won't she be on the lookout for Gutter Gid of Mudball Alley, alias Felix Fox? Ah, you're a cute one, Mother Canary; but the only way to find the country blossom is to enter your rascally trap."

Felix knew that the Mulberry street den was open to certain parties all night. He was confident that it was visited at all hours by thieves who were admitted by a certain signal, known only to those who had dealings with Mother Canary as a receiver of stolen property.

"I'll work on the jealous lay this time," he said. "I must get into that trap again."

It was ten o'clock that night when Mother Robin, the rival and enemy of Mother Canary, received a visitor who did not look like Felix Fox, yet who was that young spotter.

He had an admirable black eye, painted to perfection by a barber on the Bowery, and resembled a young thief whose last exploit had been to fall into very bad hands.

Mother Robin received the boy with a gracious smile when he told her that he was Duffy Dan, and that he had a scheme to relieve Mother Canary of a fine lot of silks which had lately been taken to her house, if he could just get beyond the door.

"I don't deal with that old luffer," said the boy. "I never took her anything an' I never will. My agent, Captain Billy, went up the flume last week, an' I am goin' ter fetch my results to you, Mother Robin. My scheme's a dandy, I tell yer—a reg'lar screamer, an' if I can catch on to the password to Mother Canary's house I'll bring here silks that'd throw the Queen of Sheba into fits."

Mother Robin put the boy through a siege of sharp questionings which he stood in an admirable manner, and she concluded that he was Duffy Dan, and that his scheme to plunder her rival, Mother Canary, was indeed a brilliant one.

"I know her password. She thinks she keeps secrets from me," said Mother Robin, "but don't I know who goes to her shanty an' what they take there? She may fool the cops and detectives, but not once does she pull anything opaque over my peepers. See here, Duffy Dan. I make no bargain with you, but if you get your fingers on the swag, you know who your friends are."

"You can bet your fragrant life, Mother Robin," said the boy, with an adroit wink in the right place. "I'm not too old to forget disinterested friendship. When I do, just throw me from the pier with ten crowbars tied along my back."

"You'll do!" laughed Mother Robin.

"You go to the door an' by feeling along the jamb at your right you'll find a little button. It can't be found at daylight, for it isn't there. Havin' found it, Duffy Dan, you press it right sharply five times. Thet's the rap that opens Mother Canary's door at night to her friends, an' to mine too, eh?"

"Ay, to yours, too," said Felix. "I owe you a thousand thanks. This is straight goods, full width an' warranted not to fade?"

"When did Mother Robin fail a friend?"

"Never that I've ever heard of."

"And it will be 'never' always!"

"The door always opens to the five signals?"

"It never fails. It opens whether Mother Canary is at the door, or out in the street."

"Good!"

Felix Fox did not tarry long after he had obtained this piece of choice information. He was let into the street with the parting injunction of Mother Robin to be careful, and off he went for another adventure in one of the most dangerous houses in New York.

Four squares intervened between the homes of the rivals in secret crime, and Felix considered his plans as he walked toward Mother

Canary's. He had no Hicks Kelly at his back now, for more than once he looked back and scrutinized those behind him.

With steady step and doubly nerved, he halted at the well-known door, and ran his hand along the jamb until it touched the secret button which he had been told was not to be seen or touched during the day. With his finger on the button Felix hesitated a minute. He knew not what the touching of it would bring forth, what peril it would introduce him to, nor into what kind of trap it would throw him.

"Hang it all! here goes, hit or miss!" ejaculated the Boy Spotter and he quickly pressed the button five times.

At the last pressure the door opened without a step in the hall, and Felix glided inside. He found himself in the same dimly-lighted hall into which he had been once dragged by Mother Canary, but this time the figure of that woman did not loom up before him; he was alone in the place.

A strange feeling crept over Felix and settled into his heart for a moment.

"I'm in the trap once more, but this time I don't feel your fingers about my bones, Mother Canary," he exclaimed. "The door, I see, opens by unseen machinery operated by touchin' the button five times. I don't know how to get out, but I'll see to that when I want to get out."

Felix heard no noise, and for several minutes he stood in the darkest spot in the corridor and watched and listened. A narrow stairway led up to the second floor, and the boy put his foot on the ghostly steps.

"What's my share to be?" suddenly asked a voice, so familiar in intonation that Felix started and immediately hugged the shadows of the lower steps and crowded himself against the wall.

"Mother Canary! the old witch herself!" escaped his lips.

"What's always been your share?" was the reply. "Enough to keep you from poverty's door, eh, Mother dear?"

"Yes. You always play fair, Darius. I don't mistrust you; but your partner—ah! he's no scaled eel."

"Silas, eh? By Jove! that's complimentary," was the laughing rejoinder. "He came back to the office with a string of choice oaths and the marks of fingers at his throat. The pigeon has talons."

"Talons?—claws!" said the woman, who, with the man, stood between the motionless boy and the door. "If it had not been for my brandy, Darius, he'd not be a member o' the firm o' Sharpe an' Dodge to-day. He wanted to go straight to the pigeon an' knife him, but I an' Hicks said 'No.' Hicks has found the counterfeiter. Ah! he's told you?"

"I know all about it, Mother," said the man, who was Darius Dodge. "The boy is a shrewd one, an' under our eyes, an' in the pigeon's feathers, will play his role to perfection. I think you may go on now. The share will not cause you to regret it, Mother dear. You have my word for that."

"Will it be a thousand?" asked the woman, anxiously.

"More than twice that," was the answer. "You may go on, I say. Toby wants his new clothes. You must not forget that a bad prisoner has already escaped—but through no fault of yours, Mother Canary. But we've outwitted him. Ha, ha! we're not on the Bowery any longer. Attend to the boy. Hicks will send for the suit to-morrow."

"I'll do it, Darius. Won't you put another five hundred to what you've promised?"

"I will."

"Oh, you're a good one," laughed the woman. "Tell the Pointer to come to-morrow; they'll be ready for him."

"Do it well."

"When did Mother Canary ever disappoint her friends?"

Darius Dodge said "never," as he thought eminently proper under the circumstances, and was let out, the door closing behind him with a very peculiar sound which told Felix that it had shut with a spring lock.

Mother Canary turned to the door at the left side of the hall, opened it and looked into the room where the Boy Spotter had been unmasked on a certain occasion well known to our readers.

"Here, Dandy Lion," called the woman, to some one in the room. "Who came in awhile ago? What! are ye asleep ag'in? Ye heard the door; it admitted somebody by the button. I'll jerk all yer bones together, I will."

Felix saw Mother Canary spring into the room and the next moment she came out drag-

ging after her a little girl of fourteen who looked as if she fully expected the tigress to carry out her threat.

"It's yer duty to hear when you're put on guard," growled Mother Canary, as she held the girl clear of the floor and administered a blow that seemed to break her cheek. "I'll show you how to watch. One o' the boys came in, for he opened the door by the button, but it's your duty to know who comes."

The blood of the Boy Spotter boiled in his veins. He ached to wrench Dandy Lion from the grip of the merciless hag of the trap; but his own peril forced him to keep down.

After several cuffs Mother Canary opened the room door again, and flung the half-unconscious girl across the threshold then turned back with a brutal laugh.

"I'll dispense with her services one o' these days an' I'll not put the city to any expense, either," she ejaculated, with a laugh. "Twenty-five hundred! Promised by Darius Dodge himself—the best of the two! I'll do my part, Darius. When Hicks calls to-morrow I'll have a bundle for him. I'd like to know what the firm will make out o' this game, but that's none o' my business. I've got a part to play. I ask no questions. To work! Hicks might come to-night."

Mother Canary went to the end of the hall and unlocked a door through which she disappeared, leaving it slightly ajar.

Felix Fox who saw this movement slipped off his shoes without noise, and glided down the corridor.

"I'm gettin' there!" he murmured.

CHAPTER X.

A VERY CLOSE SHAVE.

WHEN the Boy Spotter reached the door he found that Mother Canary had disappeared, and he stood for a little while amid darkness under the stairway.

All at once he heard a door open ahead, and he knew that the proprietress of the trap was still moving forward.

"I'm here to follow her, so here goes," murmured Felix.

Three strides in his stockinged feet brought him to a door which was shut but not locked, and to his joy it opened without noise. The first foot that he put forward touched a step, and a moment later he was descending, apparently into a cellar.

Mother Canary could not be far ahead, and he was advancing upon her when he heard the snap of a match and saw a little flame ahead. He drew back instantly and eyed the tigress.

He saw the figure of Mother Canary in a stooping posture, but for a moment only, for the match went out, and he was again enveloped by darkness.

"When Hicks comes he shall have the bundle. I've promised Darius that," said the woman, speaking aloud to herself.

Felix held his breath; the match had showed him that Mother Canary was at the end of a little corridor, and he wondered what was to happen next.

Suddenly a slight noise fell upon the boy's ears, and then a whiff of damp air assailed his nostrils.

A door had opened ahead of Mother Canary; Felix knew this as surely as if he had opened it himself. That door was one of the woman's secrets.

Once more he went forward, and glided through an opening just in the nick of time, for the unseen door, shutting noiselessly, almost caught him.

"I'm in another trap, but no difference," flashed across the boy's mind. "Ha! there goes your match again, Mother Canary."

Felix shrunk mechanically from the light, and watched the woman draw a wax-candle from her bosom and light it. He saw her hold it above her head and gaze about the place she had entered—a damp, underground apartment, with smooth walls, in which Felix could see no traces of the door by which he had entered.

Of course the adventurous boy hugged the wall, and kept in the shadow of Mother Canary's portly frame. He saw the little candle blaze up suddenly, and then heard an exclamation of discovery drop from the woman's lips.

In one corner of the cellar was a cot made of blankets, and upon it Felix saw the outlines of a boy somewhat larger than himself, and apparently fast asleep.

"That's the Jersey pigeon. I've got to him at last!" he ejaculated.

Mother Canary started toward the occupant of the blanket and held the light close to his face.

"I don't see much in this country blossom, but maybe Darius an' Silas do," she said. "They call him a bird with gold feathers—the heir to some big fortune across the pond, an' they've got a boy who's to play heir in his place. It's a pretty game—a right down cute thought, an' there's thousands in it, too. Ah! there's where the beauty comes in!" And she laughed so fiendishly over the rascals' victim that Felix with difficulty restrained himself from flying at the tigress of the cage.

"Just try to harm that Jersey yokel an' I'll show you a game that may be as beautiful as the sharpers!" hissed the Boy Spotter in the shadow of the woman's form. "Hicks Kelly shall not get his clothes without my consent. Go to work, Mother Canary, I want to see how far you intend to carry this scheme."

Wholly unconscious of the presence of the fortune-hunters' tool, Omri Otway slept soundly in the light of Mother Canary's little candle. His imprisonment had weakened and discouraged him. Nature had asserted her rights at last, and his sleep was too deep to be disturbed by the soft tread of the fiend who had come down upon him.

"What's the use of waitin'?" suddenly said Mother Canary placing the candle in the same crevice used by Silas Sharpe when he visited the Jersey boy. "I've got no scruples when I know what must be done. Now, I'll pluck you, my Jersey pigeon, an' Toby will strut in your feathers for the benefit of us all."

The attitude of the woman drove Felix Fox forward. He saw her big hands open and shut as if with madness, and she knelt at Omri's side and glared like a tigress into his face.

"She's goin' to strangle him!" exclaimed the Boy Spotter. "My God! she shall do nothin' of the kind."

In another second the fingers of the Mulberry street demoness would have clutched the boy's throat if Felix Fox had not hurled himself upon her.

"I'm here yet, my thief-queen!" exclaimed Felix. "You don't pluck the Jersey pigeon while I'm in this vicinity! You haven't forgotten Gutter Gid of Mudball Alley, have ye?"

Mother Canary rose with difficulty under the weight of the boy who gave Omri a shove with his foot to rouse him.

A cry hardly more than half-human welled from her throat when she saw her young assailant in the light of the candle.

"Shake me off if you can!" cried Felix with a laugh. "I stick closer than a brother when I'm in the stickin' humor. You warn't lookin' for me back, mother? After this when you catch a weasel in your trap, keep him away from sewer pipes."

Mother Canary grated her teeth till Felix heard them crack.

By this time Omri Otway had sprung to his feet, and was gazing in a half bewildered manner at the startling spectacle before him. He saw Mother Canary trying to shake the boy off, and instinct told him that the youth must be his friend. If he was Mother Canary's enemy, he could not be otherwise.

But the whole thing seemed little more than half real to the astonished boy. He had searched his prison, and had found no door, and he could not believe that the woman and the boy had entered it together.

"I know you!" cried the woman. "You came here with a lie before an' tried to trap me."

"An' I would have done it if the Pointer hadn't put in," replied Felix. "Thanks to the old sewer, I am here again!"

Mother Canary's retort was a cry of rage. She tried her best to shake the Boy Spotter loose. All at once Omri Otway leaped to Felix's assistance, and the two boys soon proved too much for the woman, although she fought with the fury of a lioness, and did not yield until she had been forced roughly against the cellar wall, and choked by two pair of hands.

"That's business!" said Felix rising and confronting the Jersey boy. "If Hicks Kelly comes to-night he'll go back to Toby without your clothes."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished Omri.

"They've got your wearin' apparel parceled out—that's all," was the reply. "If you didn't drop into the prettiest trap ever set in this city, shoot me for an alderman!" continued Felix with a laugh. "What's your name?"

"Omri Otway."

"Well, Mr. Otway, you've tumbled among thieves. I'm here to help you out—"

"Thank you!" cried the Jersey Pigeon gratefully. "When Silas Sharpe left me I realized

that I had fallen among bad people. That woman yonder is their friend."

"Their full-fledged vulture," said Felix with a glance at Mother Canary lying at the foot of the wall, her rounded face showing the effects of the terrible and well merited choking she had received. "I was in this den last night, but that woman got the best of me. Now I guess Felix Fox is on top. We must get out o' here as soon as possible. Hicks Kelly may come to-night."

"I don't know him," said Omri.

"An' you don't want to," smiled Felix. "Oh, it's a dandy scheme, but I can't tell you now."

"I'll do whatever you want me to," was the reply. "Omri Otway is at your service; he is willing to do anything. If this is New York, I hope I may never see it again."

The boys took the candle from the crevice in the wall, and began to search for the mysterious door. After a lengthy hunt they were guided to it by fresh footprints in the soft ground of the cellar, and the light revealed an iron button in the ceiling, which could be reached by one standing on the ground.

"There is more than one button attached to this trap," observed Felix, glancing at his companion as the hidden door opened, revealing a dark passageway ahead. "I think one o' them will get the cops into Mother Canary's house before long. Come, Omri; we make a break for the street."

Fortune seemed to favor the boys till they reached the front door in the hall. There they met a barrier that threatened to keep them inmates of the den.

"I'll see what Dandy Lion can do for us," suddenly exclaimed Felix, and he darted into a room to the left of the hall.

The next minute he reappeared accompanied by a frowsy girl, the same child Mother Canary had beaten in his presence a short time before.

She stared at the two boys, turned pale, and started back as if to fly.

"No runnin' here, Dandy Lion," said the Boy Spotter, sternly. "You must let us out. Your duty is to attend to this door; you know how to work the bottom from the inside. Quick!"

"Mother Canary will kill me."

"You don't have to stay here to afford her that pleasure," said Felix. "You can go to liberty by this door like we expect to. Besides, the time's comin' when I want you. I'll get you a place, Dandy Lion, where all the Mother Canaries in New York can't find you."

"Will you, really?" cried the girl.

"Try me, an' see. Now let us out."

The following moment the girl jerked a cord hanging alongside the door, and it opened at once. All three bounded into the street.

"Out of the worst trap in New York!" ejaculated Felix, wheeling upon Omri Otway. "Don't think, sir, that the battle is over. Before to-morrow night you'll have three of the worst scoundrels in this country at your heels. You must not go back to Greenblade; you wouldn't be safe ten hours there. When men like Sharpe, Dodge and the Pointer strike for a fortune, they will do anything."

"Yes. But my papers—the proofs of my heirship!"

"They are in the hands of the conspirators."

"Good heavens!" cried the country boy despairingly.

"Don't give it up. I'm goin' to fight it through for you. I'm not much perhaps—only Felix Fox, a New York boy; but if I don't make the three money aces wish they'd never heard o' Omri Otway o' Greenblade, bake me for a terrapin!"

Omri looked down into the Boy Spotter's eyes and seized his hand.

"I'll give you half the fortune for your work!" he cried.

"I sha'n't touch a dollar of it!" exclaimed Felix Fox.

CHAPTER XI.

SPREADING THE NET AGAIN.

IF ever a man swore roundly over a piece of disappointing news that man was Hicks Kelly or the Pointer, when he went to Mother Canary's that night a little ahead of time for a certain package which Darius Dodge had told him would contain the clothes of Omri Otway.

He found the house in an uproar, for the tigers of the den had managed to escape from the secret cellar, but was still suffering from the well deserved choking administered by the two boys.

What! Omri Otway out of their clutches—liberated by Felix Fox? The announcement struck Hicks Kelly like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. He chafed madly while Mother Canary, filling a stout arm-chair, told the terrible

story between gasps, and he swore an oath strong enough almost to bring the ceiling down that the boys should be hunted to doom.

Mother Canary was much disturbed by the fact that the Boy Spotter had found his way into her establishment by the secret button in the door-frame. She was safe no longer; the means of ingress intended for thieves only had been discovered by a friend of detectives and police, and she would have to shift her quarters much to the detriment of the flourishing business she had established in Mulberry street. She was disconsolate and in a rage. Wouldn't she like to have her fingers at Felix Fox's throat for just one minute? He would never give her away, and she would see that Omri Otway lost the best friend he had in New York.

If she had dreamed that Mother Robin, her rival, had given Felix the secret of the button, it is highly probable that there would have been a lively scene between the two thieving Amazons of Mulberry street yet that night.

Hicks Kelly had no heart to listen to the woman's story, and her wails and threats of vengeance. The famous finder of missing men saw that the gold pigeon had flown, and he took occasion to reassure Mother Canary for the fortieth time, and quietly but hastily withdrew.

"If you find Dandy Lion, choke her for me!" were the woman's parting words. "If you see her on the pier kick her into the river. She went off with the two boys. I could wring her heart. I will if I ever lay my claws on her again!"

Hicks Kelly did not stop until he reached the third floor of a certain large and respectable looking building, and had burst in upon two men who were enjoying a bottle of wine and some cigars.

"Just in time, Hicks!" called out one of the men who was Silas Sharpe. "The pigeon's feathers will be ready for Toby by to-morrow. I've engaged passage in the Arcadia. Aha! it takes us to carry out a big scheme!"

Hicks Kelly did not speak until he had reached the table and stood between the two rascals, and looked down into their upturned, wine-flushed faces.

"The bird's in the bush again," he said coolly.

"What?" cried the two men at once, and Sharpe and Dodge left their chairs as if a shell had burst under each.

"I ought to know," continued the Pointer. "I've just come from Mother Canary's. The bundle I went after walked off on the Jersey pigeon's back."

"Great heavens! Don't play with us, Hicks."

"When did I joke on a matter of this kind?"

said the private detective, flushing angrily. "Gentlemen, you've got nothin' to play for the English fortune with but a lot of papers. The heir is at large. He got away from Mother Canary, and that you know is a very uncommon occurrence."

"Who helped him away?" asked Darius Dodge.

"Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter."

The two scoundrels swore in concert.

"He played it well, anyhow; it's another feather in his cap, if I do say it myself," continued Hicks Kelly. "He got a hold of the button arrangement and got into the house while Dandy Lion, who was on guard, was sleepin' in the left-hand room. He must have seen you and Mother Canary in the hall, Dodge, for she went from the door after lettin' you out to attend to the Jersey blossom, and he followed her."

Sharpe and Dodge looked too astonished to talk; they could only glance from the Pointer to one another in utter amazement.

"Well?" said Silas Sharpe, at last. "Well, what's your plan, Hicks? I'm all unstrung. It knocks all the props from under me an' lets me down flat."

"You'd better try another glass first."

As Hicks Kelly dropped into a chair between the two men, Silas Sharpe poured out a glass of the sharp wine and downed it at a gulp. Then he turned to the Pointer and exclaimed:

"You hunt missin' men, Hicks; we want you to find the Jersey pigeon for us."

Hicks Kelly glanced at a strong, old-fashioned desk in one corner of the room.

"Oh, the papers are safe," said Sharpe, intercepting the look. "We burned the boy's carpet-sack."

"You did? That's bad. How is Toby to play Omri Otway without the old-fashioned luggage?"

"I know a store on the Bowery where there are two hundred just like it. There were no private marks about the antiquated thing; it looked like the one Cain took with him to the

Land o' Nod. They's plenty like it in the city, Hicks."

"All right, then. I'll take your judgment for it, Silas. What do I propose? To cage the pair again!"

"Of course!—certainly. You know the young fox's haunts?"

"I ought to," was the rejoinder.

"But he'll change 'em now," put in Darius Dodge.

"Hicks'll attend to that, eh, my boy?" laughed Silas.

"Try me, gentlemen," said the finder of missing men.

"Now," he continued, after a moment's pause, "I'd like to glance over them documents. I want to get a grip on a few things for Toby's benefit, an' for our own as well."

"Get 'em, Silas," said Dodge.

Silas Sharpe went to the desk in the corner, took out a pocket, and came back to the table.

"My heart jumped into my throat the moment I set eyes on these papers," he said to the Pointer. "You see, when we advertised for the Morley heirs we had no idea of ever runnin' across any; still we thought we'd try Jersey, anyhow, because it was said that years ago one of the heirs was seen at Monmouth. Well, when Omri Otway's first letter came an' told us about a lot of old papers he had found in a trunk in the garret of the farm-house with the name o' Morley scattered through 'em, I told Darius that we had found the golden pigeon at last. An' when the gawky boy came an' emptied the documents before us, I wouldn't have traded my fee," the man laughed—"for the President's salary."

While Silas Sharpe talked he took the papers from the heavy envelope that held them and Hicks Kelly fell to examining the lot.

The private detective saw them now for the first time, and if he had had doubts of their genuineness, they quickly vanished.

"It's bigger than I thought," he said to himself. "I can make Toby play this missin' heir to perfection, for Toby's a caution on the imitate. No wonder you want to get your fingers on this lay-out, Messrs. Sharpe an' Dodge. That's a cool half a million in it."

Hicks Kelly went through the old papers, one of which was a will and another an attested pedigree—all of which had been executed in England years prior to the date of our story. And Omri Otway was doubtless the only living representative of the Morley family.

"What d'you think, Hicks?" asked Sharpe, when the detective dropped the last paper.

"It's thar," said Kelly with a grin.

"But it's hard to get at without Omri Otway, or somebody like him."

"Rather difficult."

"We must fall back on Toby of yours."

"When we've made certain of the Jersey pigeon. The next time Mother Canary will not boss the job."

"Hang the hag!" grated Darius Dodge. "I hope the police will get their hands on her. When I see her again, won't I flush the bird?"

"You'd better not, Mr. Dodge," said Hicks Kelly, laying his hand on the plotter's shoulder. "You an' your pardner here are in her clutches. What if she should peach for revenge? It wouldn't be Blackwell's Island; it might be even worse than Sing Sing."

Under the eyes of the Pointer the faces of the two men assumed a deathly pallor.

"Have you ever known Mother Canary to peach, Hicks?" almost gasped Silas Sharpe.

"No, but you mustn't go up an' abuse her for lettin' the Jersey bird out o' the cage. It won't do, gentlemen. Put the papers back in the desk, Mr. Sharpe. I never fail to find missin' people, you know. I'm goin' to visit one now, ha, ha!"

He went to the door, unlocked it, and before the two money-sharks could question him further, he had passed from the room.

"What do you think of him?" said Silas Sharpe, nodding toward the door.

"He's a cool one," was the answer. "He is right, Silas. We are in the hands of Mother Canary; but, pshaw! we've been there for years. To peach on us would be to send herself to Sing Sing for a long term. She'll never do that. But I'm goin' to see her."

"To-night?"

"To-night for the second time, you know."

"Let me go, Darius. You go off like powder sometimes."

"Very well; you can go."

When Silas Sharpe placed the important papers back into the desk, he took something out and put it into his hip pocket. It glittered for a moment in the gaslight and then vanished.

"She shall never peach on this specimen of humanity," growled Silas, under his breath. "I've reached success before over her betters. Mother Canary shall never open the doors of Sing Sing for Silas Sharpe."

He left the room, bidding his partner good-night, and Darius Dodge locked the door after him.

"It's coming to the crisis," muttered this individual. "The next forty-eight hours will determine whose gold game this is."

Meantime, Hicks Kelly was walking rapidly away from the building occupied by the conspirators.

He turned several corners before he stopped, and at last let himself into a small frame house with a night key. Going up-stairs, he unlocked another door, and entered a room which was occupied by a beautiful young sewing girl at a table.

She turned at his step. It was Rosa Reed.

"I want you to write a letter for me," said the Pointer, taking a seat beside the girl. "An' something after this fashion:

"DEAR FELIX:—I want you to come to me at once. I need your assistance. I am at No. — Canal street. I—"

"But I can't write that!" interrupted the girl.

"It is a trap!"

"You shall!" flashed the Pointer.

CHAPTER XII.

RUNNING THE POINTER DOWN.

"WHAT do you think of it, Omri? It would take you in, boots an' all, wouldn't it?"

Felix Fox spoke thus to the boy from Greenblade two days after the occurrences narrated in the chapter just closed. His eyes wandered as he spoke to a letter written with a pencil on plain white paper.

"I don't know, but I think it would," said Omri, looking at Felix who stood near. "I think I would go to Rosa's assistance."

"Of course you would," smiled the Boy Spotter. "You don't know New York, an' you're not familiar with the tricks o' fellows like Hicks Kelly; that's why you would gulp that letter down an' make a ten-strike for Rosa. But, honestly, Omri, that letter is a cool devil's trap, set with a hair trigger an' intended for yours truly, Felix Fox."

"Didn't Rosa write it?" exclaimed the country boy, astonished.

"That's just what she did. But it's a trap all the same."

"Set by the girl?"

"Heavens! no," cried Felix. "Rosa wrote that letter, but she wasn't alone when she did it. There's where the trap is. She isn't at the house mentioned on that paper; she may be two miles from it. Look at it closely, an' you'll see something. The main body of that letter was written on a smooth, hard surface, the top of the girl's sewing machine, quite likely, but the number of the house was added afterward with a blunter pencil and with a rougher surface for a desk. What does that tell me, eh? That Hicks Kelly didn't know for certain what house would suit him best for the trap. He's found out since, so he added the number himself."

"You must have dreamed that out," said the innocent Jersey boy.

"No; reason, Omri!" laughed Felix. "We don't dream mysteries out in New York. Now, in the next place, that letter got to me almost direct from Hicks Kelly himself. It was put into my hand an hour ago by a boy who is known in this police district as Kerry the Kid—a midget up to scores of disguises, an' one of the cutest young scamps in the city. But he always betrays himself to me by a queer squint which he is not able to control for any length of time. When he put the letter in my hand he turned and ran off, but I run him down an' after I had convinced myself that he was Kerry, I let him go. Now, Rosa would send no letter to me by such a young thief, an' Hicks Kelly wouldn't let her see him. The letter is written to deceive, isn't it, Omri? Read it out an' let me get a new grip on the Pointer's latest piece of rascality."

The Jersey boy who had a good voice, proceeded to read aloud the letter which had fallen into Felix's hand.

It ran as follows:

"DEAR FELIX:—I want you to come to me at once, I need your assistance. I am at Number — Canal street. It is a little frame house at the mouth of an alley. I am locked up in the first room to the right at the head of the stair. It will be away to-night between nine and eleven. For heaven's sake! as you are my friend, do not disregard my appeal, but come to my rescue. I write this at intervals, and will send it to you by a boy—his supposed friend—who says he saw you last night. Do not fail to come

to me, Felix. I live in hope, for I know you are cautious and brave.

Rosa."

"A cute trap but the trigger is bare!" laughed Felix Fox. "It may be a double game, Omri. If I go to that place you may have visitors. See?"

The eyes of the Jersey boy suddenly snapped; he almost sprung from his chair.

"Whom do you mean?—Sharpe and Dodge?" he asked.

"Yes; the two biggest rascals among a hundred thousand. It may be a double-jaw-two-triggered trap, Omri. What Hicks Kelly doesn't know in trickery isn't worth findin' out. But, I'm goin' to Number — Canal."

"You?"

"Yours truly, Felix Fox," laughed the Boy Spotter.

"Into the trap?"

"Not actually upon the trigger perhaps," was the rejoinder. "In case you have visitors, Omri, you must give them a pleasant reception."

"What! take them in?" asked the Jerseyman, amazed.

"Certainly. Under the paper on the bed there are two revolvers. You have told me that you know how to use them from frequent practice on the farm at Greenblade. You may have but one visitor, perhaps none at all. But there the weapons are, an' it's best to be ready, you know. I'm off now."

"When will you be back?" said Omri Otway, following Felix to the door.

"By twelve at the furthest. Keep eyes an' ears open. The gold pigeon is in the bush, you see; if he gets back into the hand again he may lose all his feathers, ha, ha! So, beware!"

It was after eight o'clock at night when Felix walked from the room, leaving Omri Otway alone and at liberty to inspect the two revolvers that had been left behind.

The young Jerseyman had placed himself wholly under the commands of the daring boy who had risked his life to get him out of one of the most infamous dens of New York—Mother Canary's. They were in good quarters on a rather quiet street some distance from the Mulberry street trap, and since the escape had kept rather close, Felix being the only member of the twain venturing out and then well disguised.

The letter which the reader no doubt believes had been forced from Rosa by the schemer Hicks Kelly, had failed to hoodwink the boy detective. He saw in it the handiwork of the Pointer, and discovered by it that Rosa was in his power.

"I'm not a very big fish, Hicks Kelly, but I'm an old one," laughed Felix. "This isn't a good season for gudgeons. They don't take in every bait that's hung before them. The day o' reckonin' isn't far off for three o' the greatest rascals that curse this city, an' Omri Otway is to be their last victim too."

Half an hour after leaving the Jersey boy, a youth who did not look much like Felix Fox sauntered down Canal street nearly opposite the house designated in Rosa's letter. He saw everything and everybody, but he kept his eyes on the house itself most of the time.

It was, as the letter said, a two-story frame, and it stood at the mouth of an alley, with no lamp-post very near.

"That's the trap Hicks Kelly's set for me," smiled the boy. "At this very moment he is in there, waitin' for the gudgeon he expects."

Felix crossed the street a little further down and came back past the building. Half a block from it he walked into a cigar store, and took out a dirty card which he held to the light.

"I'm lookin' for my uncle what lives on this street," he said, looking up at the proprietor, a shrewd-looking little man. "He lives nigh here, at number —. Oho! I've passed it, I see. It must be the frame house down at the alley."

"That house is the number you mentioned," said the man; "but I don't think you'll find your uncle there."

"Do you know him?"

"No, sir; but that house is empty. Its last occupant was a widow woman who moved out day before yesterday, and I know that nobody's moved in since."

"That's bad," said Felix, admirably counterfeiting disappointment. "These city uncles are slippery fellows, anyhow. Mine turns out to be a widow woman! ha, ha, ha! You're sure the widow wasn't married, eh?"

The cigar-dealer laughed at Felix's question.

"She wouldn't be a widow if she was," he said, rather seriously.

"That's so," laughed the boy, and out he went.

The next house to the little frame was a

dingy brick, with an indented doorway, and which looked as if its people were dead or had gone to the seaside.

"Between nine an' eleven," Felix muttered, quoting from Rosa's letter. "I'll test that matter."

The doorway was in dense shadow, and the Boy Spotter, crowding into one corner, became as unseen from the sidewalk as though he had been in a cellar.

"Now leave your trap, Hicks Kelly," he said, settling down for a watch. "I've got the patience of a Job when I'm workin' up a case in which I'm interested."

The minutes resolved themselves into hours, but Felix did not stir. The cigar-dealer shut up his shop after dismissing his last customer, and went home smoking one of his own cheroots. The crowds on the sidewalks gradually diminished, until a pedestrian in the vicinity was a rarity.

"It must be gettin' on toward eleven," thought Felix, who looked like a statue in ebony in the doorway. He had no watch, and could only guess at the time.

All at once he heard a door open, and the next moment a cab which he had noticed motionless a short distance away rattled off and approached him. It stopped in front of the little house at the mouth of the alley.

"They had a cab for me," ejaculated Felix with a chuckle. "They were goin' to give me a free ride to—Heaven knows where! But maybe I'll take it anyhow."

He saw a man cross the sidewalk from the house and open the door of the cab.

"All right!" he said to the driver as he shut the door; the man spoke once to the horses and away they went.

Felix was not to be baffled by work of this kind. He sprung from his post on tip-toe, and adroitly swung himself upon the cab from behind where he clung and held his breath, while he was rattled over the streets at good speed.

He felt assured that the man on the inside was Hicks Kelly, who would have given much to have known that the boy who was too shrewd for his cunning was at that moment within arm's reach.

"You're a cute one, Hicks!" laughed Felix to himself. "You wouldn't have me find your new haunt—not for the prize at the end of this game. But I'm on the trail again, my dear fellow. Sing Sing yawns for you, Hicks."

The cab pursued its way through the streets of New York for more than half an hour. Felix's position was cramping him; but he held on with quiet determination, and was rewarded by being carried to the sidewalk at last.

As there was no lamp near and his body was shielded by the broad back of the vehicle, the Boy Spotter kept his position, while the door opened and the passenger got out.

Hicks Kelly it was, sure enough.

"Tracked down!" said Felix, seeing the villain walk toward a certain house with his latch-key in his hand. "I'll pay my respects to your quarters to-morrow, Mr. Kelly."

Away went the cab again, and Felix took occasion to leave it at the first cross street, after which he sauntered back and took particular notice of the house Hicks Kelly had entered.

He did not doubt that it was Rosa's prison, and he made up his mind to get the girl out of the private detective's clutches within the next twenty-four hours.

"Now, I'll go back to Omri with my luck," he said. "There's a good deal of grit in that big country boy. If he has had visitors to-night I think he has taken care of them. As Mother Canary's is on my way back, I'll take a peep at the old place."

The Boy Spotter was not long in reaching the vicinity of the Mulberry street trap, and he eyed the place with a smile of triumph at the corners of his mouth.

"I'm one o' the few who came out from between the jaws o' that steel-trap alive!" he exclaimed. "I wonder if Mother Canary's throat is well yet. I've got Dandy Lion at my hand; when I want her evidence against that infamous woman I'll get it, an' any jury will believe her against Mother Canary an' all her friends."

Felix passed the house, looked at the door, and wondered whether the button was still in its place.

If he had entered, he would have been astounded.

CHAPTER XIII.

FINGERS AT A THROAT.

THE truth of the matter was that at that moment the woman who for years had presided

over the destinies of the Mulberry street trap, was no longer its tenant.

The escape of the two boys from her clutches, and Felix's knowledge of the workings of the secret buttons, coupled to Dandyion's going off, had frightened Mother Canary to other quarters.

The old woman was afraid of the police, and with Sing Sing staring her in the face, she thought it wise to leave her old den before the authorities could descend upon it and catch her at home.

Mother Robin was elated when she learned that her rival had fled, but she knew that Mother Canary would turn up somewhere else in the city, and in truth she did.

The Mulberry street "fence" had no idea of quitting the scene of her infamous work, but she left her late place so quietly that when Mr. Silas Sharpe called to pay her a very important visit, her house was found to be empty from garret to cellar.

The money shark was disappointed.

"If she has fled the city, so much the better for us," he said, after a brief reflection. "The escape of the boys has scared her off. She was afraid that they would lodge positive information with the police, and bring them down upon her when she wasn't looking for the raid."

Silas went back to Dodge with his news, but the hatchet-faced scoundrel was not satisfied.

"We must find Mother Canary," he said. "We've put ourselves into the hands of a woman who will commit any crime for money, an' for revenge, too. We must put Hicks on her track. It won't do for us to lose sight of Mother Canary now."

It was not until the night that saw Felix Fox track the Pointer to his haunts by means of the decoy letter and the cab that either of the firm found the old woman.

This discovery was due to the keen eyes of Silas Sharpe, who caught a glimpse of a certain face at a certain window on a certain street, a long distance from the old Mulberry street den.

It was luck, and the money shark stopped suddenly and uttered a cry of exultation.

"Found at last!" he said. "Now, my friend, I'll know whether you think of peachin' on Sharp an' Dodge."

Before he went to the house in which he had discovered Mother Canary, he repaired to a second-hand clothing establishment near and exchanged his suit for one unlike any he had ever worn, clipped the long ends of his mustache, and donned a full false beard which he took from his pocket.

Thus equipped, he approached the house and rung the bell.

"Let her give me cause for mistrustin' her, an' by heavens! I'll give the coroner a job!" he hissed, while he waited to have his ring answered.

When the door was pulled open Silas Sharpe saw a little girl, much like Dandyion in appearance, and he was asked what he wanted.

"I want to see the lady up-stairs," he said. "The one who came here within the last two days."

He did not ask for Mother Canary, for he was certain that with her change of quarters she had changed her name.

"I'll go an' tell her," said the girl.

"No, I'll go up if you will show me her room. She must be lookin' for me."

The girl hesitated and looked at Silas Sharpe, but he pushed his way to the stair.

"Which room is it, my child?" he asked.

"The first door to the right. I hope she won't find fault with me for letting you go up."

"I'll see to that."

Silas Sharpe went up the steps with eagerness and triumph in possession of his heart.

"I'll hold a sword over her head that'll hang by a hair," he muttered, stopping at the first door to the right on the floor above.

He knocked gently, and heard a somewhat heavy step in the room beyond. The next moment the door was opened and he walked in.

Sure enough he stood in the presence of Mother Canary, but not the same woman in appearance who had presided over the Mulberry street cage. Her hair had been dyed a strong red, which greatly altered her looks, and she was more neatly dressed than he had ever seen her.

She recoiled a step, and gave utterance to a startling exclamation when she saw that her visitor was a man.

"Pardon me," said Silas Sharpe, trying to change his voice as he had his clothes. "I am huntin' a friend of mine, who until a few days ago lived on Mulberry street. My name is Houston—"

"No! it is Silas Sharpe. I know you," was the interruption. "That beard and those clothes may deceive some people, but they can't hoodwink me."

"Very well," answered Silas, going back to his old voice. "I have found you at last, Mother Canary."

"Hush! not that name here. I left it on Mulberry street," cried the woman, clutching his arm. "I'll never be Mother Canary any more."

"Who, then?" asked Silas Sharpe, with a smile.

"Mrs. Sophy Smith, widow."

"Oho! The escape of the kids changed your name, eh?"

"Yes. I had to do something. The Boy Spotter discovered the buttons; he saw the interior of my house. I was safe no longer. I had to do something, and that is why I'm here. Where is the Jersey pigeon?"

"Caught by this time, maybe. Hicks is playin' a game that will get the kids back into our clutches. It is ten o'clock now," Silas glanced at his watch, "an' Hicks promised to have Felix Fox in his hands by this time. We've not given the fortune up yet, Mrs. Smith. By mornin' we'll have a death-grip on it, an' Toby will be Omri Otway of Greenblade, an' we'll all be rich when the Arcadia comes back from the island in the sea."

"Darius promised me twenty-five hundred for my work."

"But you let the kids get away."

A flash of resentment lit up Mother Canary's eyes.

"Then I'm to have nothing?" she cried.

"We'll pay you accordin' to what you did," was the answer. "If the boys hadn't got away, we'd be in better shape now than we are."

"I knew nothing about the old sewer-pipe through which that young Norway escaped. I don't know how he discovered the secret buttons, and I was obeying instructions when he pounced upon me in the cellar. And you want to go back on your word? I am satisfied, Silas Sharpe. I'm not safe even here, and I know it. I am liable to be hunted down by Felix Fox and the detectives, and if I am, I tell you plainly that Mother Canary will never go to Sing Sing alone!"

The threat was not concealed. Silas Sharpe understood it at once.

He fastened his eyes in a sudden manner on the woman who had just spoken.

"You won't, eh?" he said.

"That's what I've said. Shall I say it again?"

"I understand. You will not go to Sing Sing alone if arrested? That means that you will try to send us there!"

"Take it as you understand it. You're no fool, Silas Sharpe. I haven't got many years to live, and I hate the idea of being hunted from pillar to post. I might as well spend the rest of my days in a steady house, furnished by the State, as to be cheated by men who don't call a solemn promise anything worth looking after."

Silas Sharpe threw a quick glance at the door before he moved or replied. It was tightly shut, and the gas in the chamber was not burning very brilliantly.

"We stand no threats!" he said, laying his hand on the woman who filled an arm-chair.

"You have already jeopardized our liberty by lettin' the kids get away. Why didn't you finish Felix Fox the same night he fell into your clutches? No! hang you! you had to put the hour off. An' now you threaten to peach on me an' my partner. The moment the police put their hands on you, you are willing to get us into trouble. You wake up a tiger when you smooth my hair the wrong way. You shan't have a dollar of the twenty-five hundred if—"

"Very well, Silas Sharpe. I'm dangerous, sometimes."

"And so am I!"

The next instant the right hand of the money shark flew at the woman's throat and closed there before she could prevent.

"The gates of Greenwood, not the doors of Sing Sing, will open for you!" he hissed, forcing the woman back while she grew black in the face and gasped. "You shan't stand between us an' the feathers of the Jersey pigeon. Heavens! Mother Canary; the lay-out's too big to desert because you threaten to turn State's evidence."

Mother Canary attempted to shriek, but she could not. The grip at her throat took all strength away as the merciless fingers tightened there, her hands fell useless at her sides; she no longer seemed to breathe.

Silas Sharpe did not relax his hold, but held the woman down in the chair for five minutes more.

"I'll make sure that she doesn't block our gold game," he growled. "When you cross Silas Sharpe, Mother Canary, you drive all scruples from him. Oh, I'm the tiger of the Bowery, an' I've played for high stakes before to-night. I guess that'll do."

He took his hand from the blackened throat of the queen of female "fences," and looked at his work. The gas burning in the room showed him that it could not be completer.

"Peach on us now!" he laughed. "Open the doors of Sing Sing to Sharpe an' Dodge if you can, Mother Canary!"

He glided to the door, opened it and looked into the hall. Nobody was in sight; then he turned the gas in the room very low, and went down the stair.

The little girl who had admitted him let him out.

Once in the street he glanced up at the darkened window, and chuckled triumphantly; then he started off.

He knew that they had nothing to fear from Mother Canary now.

She was dead!

CHAPTER XIV.

NOT SO GREEN. AFTER ALL.

SILAS SHARPE exhibited no remorse for the terrible crime he had committed, while he walked coolly from the scene of it. Schooled in villainy, as he had been, he was not the man to feel the gnawings of conscience.

He went straight to the new quarters of Sharpe and Dodge, eager to tell his partner that Mother Canary would hold them under no threat. If he looked back during the walk he saw nobody at his heels, but a silent Nemesis was on his track, and the vengeance of spilled blood would not be long delayed.

When he reached his office he found it untenanted and locked. Darius Dodge was not there, and Silas threw himself into a chair to wait for his partner's return. While he sat there he took out a cigar and seemed to enjoy it, even after the infamous work of his hands.

An hour passed away, but Dodge did not come.

"Hang him! let him stay out!" suddenly cried Silas, out of humor. "The good news will keep—I'm goin' to take a snooze."

There was an old sofa in one corner of the office, and the rascal threw away his cigar, turned the gas low, and threw himself down for a nap.

In less than ten minutes he was asleep, and the little room was still.

Meantime, Omri Otway had met with an exciting adventure, which followed hard upon Felix Fox's departure from him to watch the house to which Hicks Kelly was trying to decoy him by the letter forced from Rosa, the sewing-girl.

We must recur to it.

The Jersey boy did not expect any visitors, but when Felix had gone he took the two revolvers from the bed and put them where they were easier to get in case of need.

The young spotter believed that Hicks Kelly would be likely to share his knowledge of their new whereabouts to Silas Sharpe and Darius Dodge, and he had a right to fear that during his absence one, if not both, of the conspirators would make a descent upon Omri.

Felix had not gone an hour when Omri heard a light step in the hall beyond the door. He turned his head to listen and heard a low knock several times repeated.

It was not Felix; the boy knew that, so he stood up and listened with the two weapons on a table close by and covered with a piece of newspaper.

After a brief interval the knocking was repeated and Omri stepped to the door.

"Who is there?" he asked.

"A friend from Felix," was the reply in a voice the boy did not recognize.

Omri started.

"What's your name?" he innocently asked.

"John Smith. This is the place. Felix sent me with a private message."

The country boy was taken in by the apparent honesty of the voice. There might be a message from Felix on the outside. The Boy Spotter had gone to investigate some of Hicks Kelly's villainy, and he might have fallen into bad hands. If Omri Otway had been familiar with New York rascals, he might have hesitated before he opened the door. The game hoodwinked him.

"I'll let you in," he said, laying his hand on the knob. "Here we are, Mr. Smith," and he ushered a slim man with a short sandy beard into the room.

"Ah! you are clever," said the visitor, with a smile. "Felix told me that I could depend on you. Felix, your friend, has met with an accident."

"What! Felix hurt?" exclaimed the young Jerseyan.

"It's not serious, I hope—one o' the many accidents we have in New York. He was crossin' the street, corner o' Grand an' the Bowery, when he was knocked down by a passin' cab. It was the lubberly driver's fault, blast his pictures! He sent me to you, Felix did. Of course he wouldn't trust everybody."

"I know he would not," said Omri. "Is he much hurt?"

"Not serious, the doctors say. Of course a man can't be knocked over by a cab an' escape injury altogether. He has a bad bruise about the head, but no broken bones, I think, though I left before the doctors made their full report."

"Where is he?"

"Over a drug store on Grand. He wants to see you, says he's made a discovery o' some kind which he wishes to communicate. Do you know where Grand an' the Bowery meet?"

"No."

"Then, if you will let me show you I will take you to Felix."

"I'll go with you," said Omri, starting toward his hat. "Shall we walk?"

"No; we'll take a cab. I thought you'd like to get to him as soon as possible, so I fetched a cab along. Felix said—to me only—not to let you walk if I could help it. I suppose you know why."

"Yes, yes," said Omri. "Felix has his senses about him; that proves it."

The eyes of the man fairly glittered as the hoodwinked country boy donned his hat. He walked to the door as if he had heard a noise in the hall, and Omri snatched up one of the revolvers and thrust it into his pocket. They went down-stairs together and out upon the street.

Mr. John Smith whistled to a man on the box of a cab near by and the vehicle came up.

Omri sprung in and took a seat, and the man followed taking one also, with his face turned toward the boy.

"To the place I told you," said Mr. Smith to the driver.

"What does that mean?" flashed through the young Jerseyman's brain. "Why doesn't he give orders to be driven to the place where Felix is?"

The cab had moved forward and the horses had struck a brisk gait. Lamp-post after lamp-post flew by, and whenever the cab flitted through a streak of light, Omri saw that Mr. Smith's eyes had an unnatural glitter.

"Where have I seen those eyes before? surely not in Greenblade," murmured the boy, watching them intently. "I've seen them somewhere since I came to New York, and I've only seen two villains since I landed—Silas Sharpe and Darius Dodge. That man watches me too close to be only a messenger from Felix. Can it be that I have stumbled into another trap?"

This question sent a thrill to the boy's heart. He had had a terrible experience in one trap, and he did not want to fall into another.

"Ain't we almost there?" he ventured to ask the man at last.

"We're gettin' close," was the reply.

Still on, on went the cab, and the man in the seat opposite the boy kept eying him like a hawk.

Each square now added to Omri Otway's fears. He had no knowledge of the streets of New York; but he could not believe that the corner of Grand street and the Bowery was more than a mile from Felix's new retreat, and the cab had certainly gone three.

"It is true! I'm in a snare," exclaimed the boy, at last. "John Smith is not Silas Sharpe; he is not big enough for that scoundrel. He must be the other one—Darius Dodge. I remember that he had no beard, but men can get false beards in a city like this. That man has Darius Dodge's eyes. Heaven! why did I not think of that before?"

Just at that moment the vehicle passed into the brilliant light of an electric lamp, and Omri saw his fears confirmed.

A revelation seemed to have been made in the space of a second.

The man on the seat before him was Darius Dodge! There was no doubt of it now.

The next minute Omri's hand glided unperceived into his pocket.

"I've got to make a fight for it, I see," he said to himself. "The story about Felix's knock-down is a lie—a part of a scheme to get me into the clutches of the men who want my fortune."

I will show this rascal that he's caught a crawfish by one of his pincers."

Omri Otway drew his hand from his pocket as he rounded the last sentence, and a moment later "John Smith" almost started from his seat as he was confronted by a revolver that nearly touched his face!

"Sit still and look straight at me, Darius Dodge!" commanded the boy, who held the revolver with a wonderfully-steady hand. "I was a fool for not seeing into your game in the first place, but I'll make amends for it now. No talking—that's not necessary. You are Darius Dodge and I know it."

The man sunk back, glaring like a tiger at the boy from Greenblade.

"It's a pretty way to treat a friend to Felix," he growled.

Omri laughed.

"Oh, you can't play the game any further, Mr. Dodge," he said. "I had to choose between two pairs of eyes, and the ones I see before me I call yours. Hello, there, driver!"

The driver heard the call, and leaned over toward the door of the cab.

"Go straight to the nearest police-station," said Omri.

"Go to where I ordered!" flashed the menaced man.

"Obey me," said the boy. "I hold my pistol at the head of the scamp in front of me, an' if you obey him an' not me, I'll give you a bloody cab to clean. To the police-station! I've captured one of the meanest men in New York, an' that's sayin' a good deal, when I expect there are thousands in this city."

Darius Dodge—for the man was he—made no reply. The driver straightened on his seat.

"I'll obey the boy," he said. "He knows the number of my turnout, an' I don't want to figure in a row."

Darius Dodge saw that the shrewd little game he had planned all by himself was lost. He gnawed his lip, and let the cab go on.

All at once it rattled up to the sidewalk and the driver sprung from his seat.

He opened the door without a word. Omri leaped out and whirled upon the man inside.

"Come out, Mr. Dodge," he said.

The command was obeyed, but the man who emerged from the cab had a smooth face; he had left the false beard behind.

"There's the office," said the driver to Omri, nodding toward the nearest building, which was one of the numerous police-stations of the city.

"I guess you don't want me any longer," and he sprung back to his seat and drove off before Omri could reply.

"What's up, sir?" said a police-officer, who came out of the building at that moment.

"That man, sir," answered the boy, glancing at the sergeant as he pointed at Darius Dodge. "I brought him here. I had to threaten him with my pistol. I want him arrested."

"On what charge?"

"Abduction an' conspiracy, sir. There are two of them, this one is Darius Dodge. Silas Sharpe is the other, an' there is a third. We will prove all to-morrow. It is one of the meanest schemes ever got up in this city. Mother Canary is mixed up in it, sir."

The officer stepped toward Darius Dodge.

"I guess I'll have to hold you," he said.

The rascal's countenance fell.

"That's what I call turnin' the tables," said Omri.

CHAPTER XV.

A SLY YOUNG FOX.

"THIS is a serious pickle. By the Eternal! if I had it to do over I'd choke that boy in his lodgings. But who'd have taken the Jersey pigeon for a hawk? I must get word to Silas; the papers—the documents that get the English fortune are in his hands. They must be made secure!"

Thus spoke Darius Dodge, when he found himself the occupant of very cramped quarters in the station-house. He made his wants known, and was attended by a policeman.

"I would like to inform a friend of my trouble," he said. "You have arrested a very honorable an' a very innocent citizen on the charges of a worthless boy. I am goin' to see if this infamy is all owed in this city. I have a friend who will stand by me an' see me through."

"What is his name?"

"Silas Sharpe. He is my partner, an' a very upright man. I—"

"Sorry, sir," interrupted the policeman; "we have orders to the contrary, sir. You cannot communicate with Mr. Sharpe."

"Cannot!" roared Dodge.

"Them's the orders. Very sorry, sir," and the policeman walked away.

"It's that boy's work!" grated Darius. "It would be two hundred thousand in my pocket if Mother Canary had done her duty."

Before leaving the place to which he had conducted the conspirator at the pistol's muzzle, Omri Otway had narrated his adventures since leaving home. He told about falling into the clutches of Sharpe and Dodge, how he was inveigled into Mother Canary's trap, and afterward rescued by Felix Fox; and related much that Felix knew and suspected about the gang.

It was decided to arrest Silas Sharpe the next day, and meanwhile to keep Darius Dodge from communicating with him. This is why the officer on duty at the station-house refused to let the entrapped prisoner send for his partner.

Omri resolved to go back to his lodgings to wait for Felix. He was unfamiliar with the streets of New York, but he recollected the street and number, and the police hunted up a cab and sent him home with a message for the Boy Spotter to come at once to the station.

The boy from Greenblade reached his lodgings just in time to settle Felix's fears concerning his absence.

"That was a grand coup by Mr. Dodge," exclaimed the boy detective when Omri had related his adventures. "By Jupiter! boy, the Jersey pigeon is no slouch, after all. Now, sir, we must attend to Silas Sharpe."

"They promised to get him to-morrow," said Omri.

"He must not have that much string. Your papers are in his clutches. What if he should burn them? What if Hicks Kelly should hear of Dodge's arrest? No, we can't take the chances of waitin' till to-morrow. The papers are too precious. Remember that they are still in the hands of Sharpe an' Dodge."

Omri was about to make a reply when a knock was heard at the door, and the two boys started forward.

"It is Dandy Lion," exclaimed Felix, recognizing the little girl whom he first met at Mother Canary's. "Come in. We're strikin' the rascals hard, my city rose."

The girl came in, her bright eyes swimming in excitement, her bosom rising and falling like a tumultuous sea.

"They'll never deal with Mother Canary," said the girl.

"Why not?" cried Felix.

"She's dead!"

"Mother Canary dead?"

"Dead! An' she was choked to death, too."

The two boys uttered exclamations of horror.

"I think I know who did it," Dandy Lion went on. "I saw a man come out of the house a short time ago. I was on the watch as you told me to be," to Felix. "I thought his step was familiar an' when he started off I followed him. He led me a long chase an' I got very tired; but at last I ran him down. He went into number—Houston street."

"Silas Sharpe!" cried Felix.

"He had Silas Sharpe's walk; but this man had a full beard."

"It was Silas in one of his many disguises. Did you know that Mother Canary was dead when you followed the man?"

"No, I found that out when I got back. I went in to see her. She had just been found dead in her chair, with finger-marks at her throat. The whole street is excited, but nobody on it knows her as Mother Canary. She is Mrs. Smith, widow, to them all, you know."

"But the gang discovered her somehow, probably through Hicks Kelly's shrewdness. Wait here for me."

"Where are you goin'?" asked Omri.

"On a very important mission," said Felix.

"They want you at the station, you know."

"Yes. I'll attend to that."

Leaving Dandy Lion and Omri in the room, Felix Fox went down on the street.

It was now after midnight, and the sidewalks were entirely deserted.

"Matters have reached a crisis," said the Boy Spotter to himself. "Omri's papers are not safe a minute in Silas Sharpe's desk. The absence of Darius Dodge may alarm him. For the boy's sake a ten-strike must be made at once."

The young detective hurried away and turned corner after corner in his eagerness to reach a certain place within a given time.

He got to it after a long tramp, and crept upstairs on tip-toe, and with hardly any noise. He was in the building to which Sharpe and Dodge had taken their "office" after their sudden flight from the Bowery, and he expected to find Silas Sharpe at home.

Felix crept to the door and listened with all

the attention of a practiced spy. At first he heard nothing, then he caught the labored breathing of a sleeping person.

"He's at home an' asleep—probably the sleep that his favorite drink gives," murmured the boy.

He drew his shoes and reached up to the top of the door, then lifted himself to the open transom and looked into the room.

The gas had been turned very low, but it revealed the figure of a man on a lounge and his position told Felix that his slumber was very deep.

"Here goes," said the boy to himself. "Nothin' risked, nothin' gained. We'll see whether the Jersey pigeon loses his gold feathers."

He crawled through the transom without the least noise, and dropped to the floor with the lightness of a cat. Then he glided softly toward the sleeping man. Silas Sharpe was in a sound sleep, and Felix saw the clipped mustache, and on the table near by the false beard, which was proof enough that he was the man Dandyion had tracked from Mother Canary's.

After watching him a few moments, Felix went to the desk in one corner of the room. Of course he found it locked.

"Just as I expected," said Felix.

"But I don't leave here without the pigeon's property."

He went back to Silas Sharpe and was about to stoop over him when he saw something glittering on the floor beneath his pocket. A bunch of keys!

The boy detective seized the keys and returned to the desk. The first one he selected fit the lock, and he threw the lid back softly.

It did not take him half a minute to find the packet, for which the two rascals, aided by Hicks Kelly, had shrewdly plotted; it seemed to lie at his hand.

"Astonishment awaits you when you open your peepers, Mr. Sharpe," Felix exclaimed, as he hid the papers in his bosom and placed the keys where he had found them. "Good-night an' pleasant dreams! You'll see your pard tomorrow."

He went to the door again, swung himself up to the transom, and dropped safely into the corridor on the other side.

"Now for the station where they want me," he muttered. "I'll open Omri's eyes before day an' I'll—Hark! by my head! somebody's comin'!"

Instantly the boy detective shrunk into a very small space among the shadows that filled the passage. His ears had not deceived him; somebody was coming up-stairs.

Felix held his breath while he waited, and all at once he saw a human figure approach and stop at Silas Sharpe's door. What! had Darius Dodge come back?

The man took a key from his pocket, and putting it easily into the lock, turned it as softly as possible. An exclamation flew to the boy's lips, but got no further.

"Hicks Kelly!"

The man was indeed the Pointer, and when Felix saw him glide into the room with the movements of a thief, he knew that he was on some villainous mission, and hurried away.

"If you are here, Hicks Kelly, I am needed elsewhere," ejaculated the Boy Spotter. "I recollect very distinctly that I had the pleasure of tracking you home to-night."

If Felix could have watched Hicks Kelly he would have seen him unlock the desk and search it for a certain package, which he did not find.

He turned away with an oath of disappointment, and glared at the man asleep on the lounge.

"Where have you hid it, Silas Sharpe? By heavens! I could tear it out of your heart!"

Felix did not hear or see these things. He was too far away.

CHAPTER XVI.

REAPING THEIR REWARD.

MR. SILAS SHARPE did not awake from his deep sleep until the night had passed away. He was conscious that he had overslept himself.

He started up and looked about, but Darius Dodge was not to be seen. There were no evidences that his partner had returned during the night and Silas grew perplexed.

"He never took a spell like this before without servin' notice on me," he said. "He can't be very anxious to know how I got along with Mother Canary last night. He may turn up this mornin'. I'll wait for him awhile, an' while I'm doin' that, I'll just gaze on the feathers

plucked from the fattest pigeon that ever came to our net."

He picked up the keys which he found on the floor, and opened the old desk. A glance was enough.

"Great heavens! robbed!" he cried, starting back, trembling and white. "Have you cut loose from your old partner an' gone off with the papers, Darius Dodge? Woe to you if you have deserted Silas Sharpe to play this gold game through alone! I'll serve you worse than I served the ex-queen o' Mulberry street last night. I have been robbed!"

He looked like a man half demented as he stood in the middle of the room, glaring at the open desk and the empty pigeon-hole.

All at once a footstep sounded in his ears, and he sprang to the door.

"It is Darius!" he said. "I'll meet him with a look that'll settle the whole thing."

So certain was Silas Sharpe that the person outside was his partner in scoundrelism that he unlocked the door and threw it wide to greet a stalwart captain of police, and Felix Fox!

"That's the man, captain," said the Boy Spotter, pointing to the thunderstruck Silas. "That is Mr. Silas Sharpe, of Sharpe an' Dodge, Great American Estate Detectives. I'm even with Omri now; he bagged the other one last night."

"What's that?" cried Silas, catching at the boy's last remark.

"Omri took Dodge to the station last night, an' now I hand you over," was the answer.

Silas gave the youth a terrible look and turned to the officer.

"Do you intend to arrest me?" he asked.

"That is my errand here."

"On what charge?"

"Murder."

The last vestige of color fled from Silas Sharpe's face; the officer was not choice as to language.

"A woman called Mrs. Sophia Smith, but recognized as Mother Canary, the Mulberry street 'fence,' was killed last night in her new quarters on Blank street," continued the officer. "You are charged with having killed her."

"Accused by that young scamp, I suppose," cried Silas, glaring at Felix.

"No, sir," said the Boy Spotter. "I didn't follow you from Mother Canary's house last night, but some one else did. I guess the jig is up, Silas, an' the Jersey pigeon will keep his golden feathers after all."

There was no reply. Silas Sharpe stood like a statue on the floor till the hand of the police captain dropped heavily upon his shoulder.

"Darius has already made a full confession of scores of your swindling tricks," Felix went on, looking at Silas. "I said long ago that the doors of Sing Sing would open to you two money sharks one o' these days. Darius is at the station; you'll see him there."

"If I do, by the Eternal! I'll choke him to death!" exclaimed Silas Sharpe.

The captain and Felix exchanged quick glances at this; they thought of the woman who had been served thus just the night previous.

Silas Sharpe did see his guilty partner at the station and would have flung himself upon him if he had been allowed in Dodge's cell. Darius Dodge had cowardly turned State's evidence, hoping by it to regain his liberty; but the courts were not going to let such a rascal get off so easily. Silas accused Darius of robbing the desk; this the partner indignantly denied.

"Then the other one did it," grated Silas Sharpe. "The papers have fallen into the hands of Hicks Kelly an' he expects to palm his tool Toby off for the Otway boy an' scoop in the whole thing. But he shall never do that! I'll peach on Hicks Kelly myself. I'll expose his secret of findin' missin' people. I'll send him to Sing Sing, too."

Before the sun shone in the streets of New York that morning another man was brought to the station and confronted by the crestfallen partners.

"Do you know this man?" the police captain asked them.

"Yes, sir. It is Hicks Kelly," said Silas Sharpe promptly. "He served me a trick last night that I'll never forget. When you want to send the Pointer to Sing Sing, captain, call on Silas Sharpe. By heavens! I'm not goin' thar alone."

Hicks Kelly laughed coldly.

"If I haven't heard amiss, I think you'll find the gallows first, Silas," he said. "Couldn't you get along without killin' Mother Canary? Dandyion tracked you down. Her evidence an' that of the girl who showed you to the old woman's room is enough to lengthen your neck. I guess you'll not make much by peachin' on Hicks Kelly, old boy."

The Pointer turned away as he finished, and Silas Sharpe looked like a man doomed to die.

"Confound you! you ran the game down!" hissed Kelly, when he saw Felix Fox brought into the room to recognize him. "You was at my house last night."

"Yes, while you were at the office," was the reply. "The next time you try to fool a tcy with a decoy letter, you must play a shrewder game. Always look behind your cab when you take midnight rides in Gotham. I found Rosa at your quarters last night, an' I took her back to her old little room. Yes, I guess I've run the game down! Omri Otway will get his fortune after all."

At the trial which followed the arrest of the three money sharks, the base scheme to deprive the Jersey boy of his rightful inheritance was thoroughly exposed. Hicks Kelly was shown to be a deeper-dyed villain than anybody had thought him to be, and his scheme to get possession of Rosa Reed, the sewing-girl, set all hearts against him. While actual murder was not proved against him, Darius Dodge's confessions left the stain of blood on his record, and he was sent up for twenty years.

Darius lightened his own sentence by giving evidence against his companions in crime, but he got seven years, when he expected to get off scot-free.

Silas Sharpe was held for murder. While the evidence against him was circumstantial, it was of the most convincing kind. There was no doubt in the mind of any one who had heard of his career that he had strangled Mother Canary.

His case never came to trial, however, for one week before the day set apart for its hearing the scoundrel committed suicide in his cell, thus winding up the earthly affairs of the firm of Sharpe and Dodge.

Nobody regretted his action, and two men in Sing Sing rejoiced greatly when they heard of it.

Omri Otway's papers fell into the hands of honest attorneys, who pressed the boy's claims, and with but little trouble obtained for him the Morley estate, which was a gigantic fortune.

Omri tried to press a large part of it upon Felix Fox for his valuable services, but the Boy Spotter shook his head.

"I didn't work for money. I wanted to break up that gang of three, an' to save you from their clutches," Felix said. "I guess we got thar, eh, Omri? The Jersey pigeon keeps his golden plumage!"

"I'll put the money in the bank to your credit," persisted Omri. "If it had not been for you, I'd be in Mother Canary's trap to-day—dead."

"See here! If you must give that sum away, give it to Rosa—put it in the bank for her. An' when the boss girl of New York becomes Mrs. Felix Fox, as she will one o' these days, she can go to housekeepin' in style."

Omri Otway laughed, and from that moment Rosa Reed was rich.

The Greenblade boy went back to Jersey, where he quietly enjoys his fortune, and often recalls his experience among the traps of New York.

Toby, Hicks Kelly's intended heir, was frightened away by his master's arrest.

"Dandyion" was not forgotten by Omri when he came to distribute his fortune.

And Felix Fox?

He is still a terror to the gold sharks of Gotham.

THE END.

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- 291 Turk, the Boy Ferret.
- 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
- 299 A No. 1, the Dashing Toll-Taker.
- 303 Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; or, The Iron-Nerved Sport.
- 325 Kelley, Hickey & Co., the Detectives of Philadelphia.
- 330 Little Quack-Shot; or, The Dead Face of Daggersville.
- 334 Kangaroo Kit; or, The Mysterious Miner.
- 339 Kangaroo Kit's Racket.
- 343 Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood.
- 348 First-Class Fred, the Gent from Gopher.
- 353 Yreka Jim, the Gold-Gatherer; or, The Lottery of Life.
- 373 Yreka Jim's Prize.
- 378 Nabob Ned; or, The Secret of Slab City.
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- 389 Bicycle Ben; or, The Lion of Lightning Lode.
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- 400 Wrinkles, the Night-Watch Detective.
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- 434 Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives.
- 438 Santa Fe Sal, the Slander.
- 436 Sealskin Sam, the Sparkler.

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- 2 Kansas King; or, The Red Right Hand.
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- 158 Fancy Frank of Colorado; or, The Trapper's Trust.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM.

- 7 The Flying Yankee; or, The Ocean Outcast.
- 17 Ralph Roy, the Boy Buccaneer; or, The Fugitive Yacht.
- 24 Diamond Dick; or, The Mystery of the Yellowstone.
- 62 The Shadow Ship; or, The Rival Lieutenants.
- 75 The Boy Duellist; or, The Cruise of the Sea-Wolf.
- 102 Dick Dead-Eye, the Boy Smuggler.
- 111 The Sea-Devil; or, The Midshipman's Legacy.
- 116 The Hussar Captain; or, The Hermit of Hell Gate.
- 197 Little Grit; or, Bessie, the Stock-Tender's Daughter.
- 204 Gold Plume; or, The Kid-Glove Sport.
- 216 Bison Bill, the Prince of the Plains.
- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trapper.
- 229 Crimson Kate; or, The Cowboy's Triumph.
- 237 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Freelance Heir.
- 250 The Midshipman Mutineer; or, Brandt, the Buccaneer.
- 264 The Floating Feather; or, Merle Monte's Treasure Island.
- 269 The Gold Ship; or, Merle, the Condemned.
- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, The Chase of "The Gold Ship."
- 280 Merle Monte's Fate; or, Pearl, the Pirate's Bride.
- 284 The Sea Marauder; or, Merle Monte's Pledge.
- 287 Billy Blue-Eyes, the Boy Rover of the Rio Grande.
- 304 The Dead Shot Dandy; or, Benito, the Boy Bugler.
- 308 Keno Kit; or, Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
- 314 The Mysterious Marauder; or, The Boy Bugler's Long Trail.
- 377 Boned, the Boy Rover; or, The Flagless Schooner.
- 383 The Indian Pilot; or, The Search for Pirate Island.
- 387 Warpath Will, the Boy Phantom.
- 398 Sawdust, the Boy Lieutenant.
- 402 Isador, the Young Conspirator; or, The Fatal League.
- 407 The Boy Insurgent; or, The Cuban Vendetta.
- 412 The Wild Yachtsman; or, The War-Cloud's Cruise.
- 429 Duncan Dare, the Boy Refugee.
- 433 A Cabin Boy's Luck; or, The Corsair.
- 437 The Sea Raider.
- 441 The Ocean Firefly; or, A Middy's Vengeance.
- 446 Haphazard Harry; or, The Scapegrace of the Sea.
- 450 Wizard Will; or, The Boy Ferret of New York.
- 454 Wizard Will's Street Scouts.
- 462 The Born Guide; or, The Sailor Boy Wanderer.
- 468 Neptune Ned, the Boy Coaster.
- 474 Flora; or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.
- 485 Ferrets Afloat; or, Wizard Will's Last Case.
- 487 Nevada Ned, the Revolver Ranger.
- 495 Arizona Joe, the Boy Pard of Texas Jack.
- 497 Buck Taylor, King of the Cowboys.
- 503 The Royal Middy; or, The Shark and the Sea Cat.
- 507 The Hunted Midshipman.
- 511 The Outlawed Middy.
- 520 Buckskin Bill, the Comanche Shadow.
- 525 Brothers in Buckskin.
- 530 The Buckskin Bowers.
- 535 The Buck skin Rovers.
- 540 Captain Ku-Klux, the Marauder of the Rio.
- 545 Lieutenant Leo, the Son of Lafitte.
- 550 Lafitte's Legacy; or, The Avenging Son.
- 555 The Creole Corsair.
- 560 Pawnee Bill, the Prairie Shadower.
- 565 Kent Kingston, the Card King.

BY CHARLES MORRIS.

- 118 Will Somers, the Boy Detective.
- 122 Phil Hardy, the Boss Boy.
- 126 Picayune Pete; or, Nicodemus, the Dog Detective.
- 130 Detective Dick; or, The Hero in Rags.
- 142 Handsome Harry, the Bootblack Detective.
- 147 Will Wildfire, the Thoroughbred.
- 152 Black Boss, Will Wildfire's Racer.
- 157 Mike Merry, the Harbor Police Boy.
- 162 Will Wildfire in the Woods.
- 165 Billy Baggage, the Railroad Boy.
- 170 A Trump Card; or, Will Wildfire Wins and Loses.
- 174 Bob Rockett; or, Mysteries of New York.
- 179 Bob Rockett, the Bank Runner.
- 183 The Hidden Hand; or, Will Wildfire's Revenge.
- 187 Fred Hilyard, the Life Boat Boy; or, The Smugglers.
- 189 Bob Rockett; or, Driven to the Wall.
- 196 Shadowed; or, Bob Rockett's Fight for Life.
- 206 Dark Paul, the Tiger King.
- 212 Dashing Dave, the Dandy Detective.
- 220 Tom Tanner; or, The Black Sheep of the Flock.
- 225 Sam Charcoal, the Premium Dandy.
- 235 Shadow Sam, the Messenger Boy.
- 242 The Two "Bloods"; or, Shanandoah Bill and His Gang.
- 252 Dick Dashaway; or, A Dakota Boy in Chicago.
- 262 The Young Sharps; or, Rollicking Mike's Hot Trail.
- 272 Jolly Jim, the Detective Apprentice.
- 289 Jolly Jim's Job; or, The Young Detective.
- 298 The Water-Hound; or, The Young Thoroughbred.
- 305 Dashaway, of Dakota; or, A Western Lad in the Quaker City.
- 321 Ralph Ready, the Hotel Boy Detective.
- 341 Tony Thorne, the Vagabond Detective.
- 353 The Reporter-Detective; or, Fred Flyer's Blizzard.
- 367 Wide-Awake Joe; or, A Boy of the Times.
- 379 Larry, the Leveller; or, The Bloods of the Boulevard.
- 403 Firefly Jack, the River-Rat Detective.
- 423 The Lost Finger; or, The Entrapped Cashier.
- 428 Fred Flyer, the Reporter Detective.
- 432 Invincible Logan, the Pinkerton Ferret.
- 456 Billy Brick, the Jolly Vagabond.
- 466 Wide-Awake Jerry, Detective; or, Entombed Alive.
- 479 Detective Dodge; or, The Mystery of Frank Hearty.
- 488 Wild Dick Rockett.
- 501 Boots, the Boy Fireman; or, Too Sharp for the Sharper.
- 566 The Secret Service Boy Detective.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

- 2 Yellowstone Jack; or, The Trapper.
- 48 Black John, the Road-Agent; or, The Outlaw's Retreat.
- 65 Hurricane Bill; or, Mustang Sam and His Pard.
- 119 Mustang Sam; or, The King of the Plains.
- 136 Night-Hawk Kit; or, The Daughter of the Ranch.
- 144 Dainty Lance, the Boy Sport.
- 151 Panther Paul; or, Dainty Lance to the Rescue.
- 160 The Black Giant; or, Dainty Lance in Jeopardy.
- 168 Deadly Dash; or, Fighting Fire with Fire.
- 184 The Boy Trappers; or, Dainty Lance on the War-Path.
- 203 The Boy Pards; or, Dainty Lance Unmasks.
- 211 Crooked Cale, the Caliban of Celestial City.
- 310 The Barranca Wolf; or, The Beautiful Decoy.
- 319 The Black Rider; or, The Horse-Thieves' League.
- 335 Old Double Fist; or, The Strange Guide.
- 355 The King of the Woods; or, Daniel Boone's Last Trail.
- 449 Kit Fox, the Border Boy Detective.

BY OLL COOMES.

- 5 Vagabond Joe, the Young Wandering Jew.
- 13 The Dumb Spy.
- 27 Antelope Abe, the Boy Guide.
- 31 Keen-Knife, the Prince of the Prairies.
- 41 Lasso Jack, the Young Mustang.
- 58 The Border King; or, The Secret Foe.
- 71 Delaware Dick, the Young Ranger Spy.
- 74 Hawk-eye Harry, the Young Trapper Ranger.
- 83 Rollo, the Boy Ranger.
- 134 Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman.
- 143 Scar-Face Saul, the Silent Hunter.
- 146 Silver Star, the Boy Knight.
- 153 Eagle Kit, the Boy Demon.
- 163 Little Texas, the Young Mustang.
- 178 Old Solitary, the Hermit Trapper.
- 182 Little Hurricane, the Boy Captain.
- 202 Prospect Pete; or, The Young Outlaw Hunters.
- 208 The Boy Hercules; or, The Prairie Tramps.
- 218 Tiger Tom, the Texas Terror.
- 224 Dashing Dick; or, Trapper Tom's Castle.
- 228 Little Wildfire, the Young Prairie Nomad.
- 238 The Parson Detective; or, The Little Ranger.
- 243 The Disguised Guide; or, Wild Raven, the Ranger.
- 260 Dare-Devil Dan, the Young Prairie Ranger.
- 272 Minkskin Mike, the Boy Sharpshooter.
- 290 Little Foxfire, the Boy Spy.
- 306 The Sky Demon; or, Rainbolt, the Ranger.
- 334 Whip-King Joe, the Boy Ranchero.
- 409 Hercules; or, Dick, the Boy Ranger.
- 417 Webfoot Mose, the Tramp Detective.
- 422 Baby Sam, the Boy Giant of the Yellowstone.
- 444 Little Buckskin, the Young Prairie Centaur.
- 457 Wingedfoot Fred; or, Old Polar Saul.
- 463 Tamarac Tom, the Big Trapper Boy.
- 473 Old Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic.
- 482 Stonewall Bob, the Boy Trojan.
- 562 Blundering Basil, the Hermit Boy Trapper.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

- 28 Nick o' the Night; or, The Boy Spy of '76.
- 37 The Hidden Lodge; or, The Little Hunter.
- 47 Nightingale Nat; or, The Forest Captains.
- 64 Dandy Jack; or, The Outlaws of the Oregon Trail.
- 82 Kit Harefoot, the Wood-Hawk.
- 94 Midnight Jack; or, The Boy Trapper.
- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 123 Klown Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack From Red Core.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Bullet; or, Little Topknot's Crusade.
- 231 Plucky Phil; or, Rosa, the Red Jezebel.
- 241 Bill Bravo; or, The Roughs of the Rockies.
- 255 Captain Apollo, the King-Pin of Bowie.
- 267 The Buckskin Detective.
- 279 Old Winch; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
- 294 Dynamite Dan; or, The Bowie Blade of Cochetopa.
- 302 The Mountain Detective; or, The Trigger Bar Bully.
- 316 Old Eclipse, Trump Card of Arizona.
- 326 The Ten Pards; or, The Terror of Take-Notice.
- 336 Big Benson; or, The Queen of the La-so.
- 345 Pitiless Matt; or, Red Thunderbolt's Secret.
- 356 Cool Sam and Pard; or, The Terrible Six.
- 366 Velvet Foot, the Indian Detective.
- 386 Captain Cutlass; or, The Buccaneer's Girl Foe.
- 396 Rough Rob; or, The Twin Champions of Blue Blazes.
- 411 The Silken Lasso; or, The Rose of Ranch Robin.
- 418 Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter.
- 425 Texas Trump, the Border Rattler.
- 436 Phil Flash, the New York Fox.
- 445 The City Vampires; or, Red Rolfe's Pigeon!
- 461 One Against Fifty; or, The Last Man of Keno Bar.
- 470 The Boy Shadow; or, Felix Fox's Hunt.
- 477 The Excelsior Sport; or, The Washington Spotter.
- 499 Single Sight, the One-Eyed Sport.
- 502 Branded Ben, the Night Ferret.
- 512 Dodger Dick, the Wharf-Spy Detective.
- 521 Dodger Dick's Best Dodge.
- 528 Fox and Falcon, the Bowery Shadows.
- 538 Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret.
- 543 Dodger Dick's Double; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
- 553 Dodger Dick's Desperate Case.
- 563 Dodger Dick, the Boy Videoq.

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